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# STATESMAN AND NATION

## The Week-end Review

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## THE TORY BLOCKADE

Mr. Bevin's list of reasons for the present wave of strikes is worth the most careful attention. "Some strikes," he said, "are deliberately provoked for ulterior reasons by employers." In some cases the object is to "create conditions to alter contracts." Some strikes arise from local grievances. Others, Mr. Bevin tells us, are organised for political motives. In no case during the war have any of the Trade Unions "paid one penny in support of a strike." Some of the strikes, all of them unofficial, are initiated by political groups, "Trotskyites and all sorts of people."

There is one common factor—discontent. Present grievances, whether fomented by Trotskyites or deliberately created by employers, are inevitably linked with suspicion about the future. The urgency of 1940 is over; many who were then concerned only with defeating Fascism abroad naturally recall that the old enemies of the working classes in Britain are still undefeated. This discontent is no longer canalised into political channels. Communists, desiring only the maximum collaboration with the Soviet Union, minimise industrial grievances, leaving a clear field for their rivals. The Labour Party, pledged to the political truce, loyally avoids disruptive controversies. Inevitably as the strain of war increases, the workers ask whether they are again to be bamboozled. Miners remember the Sankey Report and the promises and struggles that ended with defeat in 1926. No one should be surprised if, in these circumstances, Trade Union discipline breaks down and groups of workers decide to challenge the authorities on their own account. This suits many employers who are pleased to encourage any movement that weakens the Unions, and so far nothing positive has been done by the Government to counteract the widespread belief that Labour was induced to accept national unity only to find that all the promises of 1940 are to be dishonoured in the days of victory.

Nothing could come of these promises unless certain fundamental decisions were made in local government, in location of industries and in the control of land. Committees were appointed, reports were produced. In no one case has the Government so far given a decision in favour of action. In one case Mr. Churchill has given a negative decision. Last week the County Council Association and the Municipal Corporations demanded a review of local government areas and powers. Their request was prompted by fear that the piecemeal handling of reconstruction problems would fundamentally upset the local government system and cause its disintegration at a time when it will be vitally needed as an instrument for the repair of war damage, and for post-war reconstruction. Mr. Churchill refused. At last, then, the Government has decided something about post-war policy at home. It has decided not to have any positive policy about the reconstruction of local government.

So far, the decision stands practically alone; for on no other major issue has the Government yet decided anything at all. We supposed that it had, as long ago as the middle of 1941, accepted the main recommendations of the Interim Report of the Uthwatt Committee; and we were told at that time that a Bill to give effect to them was in active preparation. Nothing has been heard of that Bill for a long time now; and from what Lord Snell, speaking for the Government, said in the House of Lords only last week, we gather that the Government is now undecided whether or not to carry out the promise it then made, that land needed for public purposes after the war shall be subject to a price ceiling of 1939 values. We are not at all surprised that Lord Latham said that the only result would be a lifting up of hearts among building speculators who are lying in wait for city reconstruction plans in order to buy up key sites and extort for them a monopoly price.

About the major recommendations made in the final Uthwatt Report—collection of betterment from private landowners in developed areas, provision for public acquisition of built-up land needed for planning, and "global" purchase of development rights in undeveloped land—Lord Snell had not a word to say. This final Report has been in the Government's hands for considerably more than a year; the Scott Report longer still; and the Barlow Report time out of mind. Yet on not one of these Reports has a single decision yet been taken or at any rate publicly announced. In the parallel case of the Beveridge Report it can at least be argued that the requisite legislation needs much detailed work and that the Government has at any rate pronounced in principle on most of the proposals—however unsatisfactory we may deem its pronouncement to have been. For the delays over Uthwatt there is no such excuse. The main issues are few and simple; and, given a clear pronouncement upon them, some waiting for the filling in of the details would not have greatly mattered. But there has been nothing at all; and accordingly no local authority can proceed with any confidence to plan for the post-war rebuilding and development, because no one can tell at all what the cost of any plan will be, or by how much the cost will be swollen if the speculators are allowed to get advance knowledge.

Who is responsible for these intolerable evasions and delays? Some say the Prime Minister, because he brushes such issues impatiently aside. There is substance in this charge; but there are other obstructionists. Just as the insurance companies and some of the friendly societies have declared war on Beveridge, so the landed interests and the speculators have declared war on Uthwatt, and all the hosts of unregulated business "enterprise" on Barlow and Uthwatt and on every attempt to invest the new Ministry of Town and Country Planning with any power to plan. Against every proposed change can be raised the cry that it is bound to arouse political controversy and should therefore be set aside for the time. Nor are these vested interests without valuable allies in Whitehall. The Treasury, under Kingsley Wood, shelved every project it could shelve that was likely to cost money; and the mutual jealousies of Civil Servants, each intent on telling the others to keep off his own department's grass, have played into reaction's hands. Sir William Jowitt, supposed to co-ordinate efforts and reconcile inter-departmental differences, has been left without real status, without any staff worth talking about, and without any power to get himself listened to by anybody. To all appearances he has been put where he is only to be kicked. How long is this situation to be allowed to go on? Just as there must be a

Minister of Social Security to get the Beveridge Plan into effect, so there must be a Minister of Planning with wide enough power to force a decision on Uthwatt, on Scott, on Barlow, and on many other vital questions which have to be settled before any practical planning for home reconstruction can even begin. For two years the uncontrolled veto of the Tory Central Office and that of a small group of high departmental officials have served as alternative instruments for blocking every proposal for social reconstruction after the war. The leaders of Labour will forfeit their title deeds if they do not now use their position for the purposes for which, after all, they were originally elected.

### Italy and the Balkans

An interim balance-sheet of Allied operation in the Mediterranean during September reveals both credit and debit entries. Naples should soon be ours; and in the three weeks which have elapsed since our landings at Salerno and Taranto, we have presumably built up a force strong enough to begin shortly a successful offensive against the group of German divisions which stand between the Allies and Rome. With command of the sea secure in Allied hands, and with no German garrisons or aircraft left in Sardinia or Corsica, opportunities should exist for amphibious threats to the enemy's vulnerable flank, between Naples and Genoa. Speed is the essence of the Italian campaign. Otherwise prolonged diversion of effort to the peninsula, restricting Allied ability to strike in other directions, will suit the enemy's book, rather than ours. Already we have given the enemy valuable weeks in which to secure hold of key centres in the Balkans exposed by the defection of his ally. He has driven the Partisans from the Adriatic ports of Susak and Split: worse still, he has wrested Cephakonia and Corfu from the friendly Italians. So long as Germany holds Crete and Rhodes our acquisition of minor bases in the Dodecanese fails to open the Aegean. Operations against the "under-belly" are, so far, methodical rather than dynamic.

### Mediterranean Politics

The decision to include French, as well as Soviet, representatives on the new Mediterranean Commission is timely and welcome. The nomination of the Deputy Commisar for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Vyshinsky, as the Soviet delegate, measures the interest that his Government take in this body. Amongst its immediate tasks will be the control of Allied military government in newly conquered or liberated territories. The French National Committee, which has now appointed a Civil Minister of Defence, rightly insists on a purely French civil administration in Corsica now that the Nazis have been driven out. How far can this be a precedent for the very diverse areas on the mainland which may be invaded by the Allies? Obviously France will resist any attempt to impose the sort of administration considered suitable for a beaten enemy. "We do not want," said Sir Stafford Cripps recently, "either by accident or design to fasten on these people, whether enemy or friend, a pseudo-Fascism or a military dictatorship." The more Amgot or its equivalent can enlist the aid of the population in its job the better. It will be easier to do this if the French, Greeks and Yugoslavs are convinced that both the form and the practice of Amgot represent the agreed policy of all the Allies and not merely the Anglo-Americans.

### A New Ally?

Marshal Badoglio's Government has raised an awkward if natural question: it asks to be promoted from the status of a defeated enemy to that of an ally. Does that mean that it will regain ultimately the possession and control of its Fleet and escape the penalty of disarmament imposed by the Atlantic Charter? The Abyssinians may have claims against the King-Emperor (who still uses that title) and any government headed by the Marshal, whom courtesy prompts us to describe as the Duke of Addis-Ababa. The Greeks and the Albanians may want some acts of restitution for the even more recent aggressions they suffered. Words matter little: the ex-Emperor and the Duke may be "co-belligerents," as the diplomatists suggest, for all we care. What concerns us more is to know what kind of Italy they are fighting for. If Count Sforza, a genuine Liberal, were to join them as their partner in a reconstructed government, the façade would look better. But he would be taking a very risky step. Amgot has usually confirmed the ex-Fascist mayors and prefects in office, which means in wartime that they will hold most of the jobs, the patronage and the orders for supplies in their hands. If simultaneously at the top Washington and London so use their power to give or withhold status, Lend-Lease aid, and easy terms of settlement as to ensure a conservative solution of domestic problems, there is little hope for social reconstruction. The Monarchy which Mr. Churchill is so anxious to preserve is a symbol of big estates and absentee landlords.

### Kings and Guerillas

The gallant movement of resistance in Greece, which is now in control, openly and above ground, of an appreciable fraction of that country, is in sharper conflict than ever with the King's Government. Its delegates have left Cairo empty-handed. They demanded that three representatives chosen by the National Liberation Movement (E.A.M.) should be given half the seats in the provisional government which will go to Greece with the army of rescue. That was refused. Failing this, they feel no confidence in any vote that might be taken, even if the King were to consent to a plebiscite on the issue—monarchy versus republic. Till this is decided, they insist that he shall not return to Greece. His offer of free elections for a constituent assembly does not meet their views. If we carry the King to Athens under the shelter of our army, Greeks will undoubtedly feel that we are imposing our puppet upon them. To serve the interests of a patron Great Power has always been the function of Balkan Kings. The facts of the Greek drama, together with a statement of policy, are carefully set out in a useful pamphlet obtainable from the Union of Democratic Control.

### Steel at the State Department

The choice of Mr. Stettinius as the permanent head of the State Department makes an epoch in the history of international relations. Has the influence of Big Business ever before been recognised with such perfect frankness? There is this to be said for it, that he is an abler and more open-minded man than any of the noted reactionaries who have hitherto served in this Department. What knowledge of other countries and of diplomatic usage he may have we cannot judge. As the head of the Lend-Lease administration he made a good impression and knew how to handle the niggards and isolationists in Congress. But his fame rests on his success, while still a youngish man, as the head of the Steel Trust, with a salary of £25,000 a year. It had a shocking record, before he arrived, in its dealings with labour. He promptly ended the twelve-hour day and went over to an eight-hour shift. On the other hand, he followed a severely restrictionist policy in the early years of this war and resisted the expansion of productive capacity, doubtless with a view to maintaining prices in the post-war world. It took the exposure by Senator Truman's Committee to force expansion on a reluctant Steel Trust, but the kindly services of Mr. Jesse Jones, in providing the extra plant at the nation's charge, laid balm on its wounds. If Mr. Stettinius attends the conference with the U.S.S.R., the protagonists who divide this earth, Big Business and the armed masses, will look into each others' eyes for the first time. Steel meets Stalin.

### The New Zealand Elections

The first wartime general election in New Zealand has produced no surprises. It was generally expected that the Labour Party would lose a few seats to the National Party, and that the unusually large number of independent and splinter party candidates would be eliminated. It would be unfair to compare the results too closely to the recent Labour success in Australia. Mr. Fraser's Government has been in office a long time and had to accept responsibility for inevitably unpopular wartime policies. Mr. Curtin, on the other hand, could claim with some justification that his Government had saved the country at a moment of great crisis. Yet there were certain similar issues in both elections. The Labour administration was faced with a demand for a coalition government. In each case it was charged, though with different emphasis, with using the national emergency to introduce unnecessary State control and regimentation, with inefficiency and waste, and with being too susceptible to the pressure of the Trade Unions. In both cases the Opposition was hamstrung by its inability to produce any real fighting issue. They therefore had to fall back upon the grievances and dislocation which large-scale organisation for war will always produce. There seems to be some truth in the National Party's claim that the election results in New Zealand still show an unwillingness to endorse far-reaching State control. This might be expected in a country where, unlike Australia, industrialisation is as yet in its early stages. It was the stability of the soldier's vote that really secured the Labour majority. The excellent record of the New Zealand Labour Party in social legislation before the war does not seem to have been lost on those who will one day return from the front.

### Pay As You Go

Why is the new "pay-as-you-go" method of collecting income tax to be confined to weekly wage-earners—incidentally, a class which it is at certain points not easy to define? There are many persons whose contracts are monthly who have fully as strong a case as the weekly wage-earners for not being left with an uncertain liability hanging over them. The new method of collection appears to have been well devised, and to be both simple and convenient from the standpoint of the employer on whom the burden of making the deductions falls. Incidentally, it will also provide the State with a running census of wages paid—a statistical asset which has long been needed and can be used to put assertions about earnings out of the realm of fancy into that of ascertained fact. The change in tax collection ought to have been made long ago—at latest when income tax began to apply to the general run of wage-earners. The Treasury has been very slow in accepting, and is now being very timid in applying it. Moreover, though collection will be simple, the tax itself will not. It remains as murky as ever, no change in methods of assessment accompanying the change in collection. Income tax reform, on a much larger scale, is long overdue; a tax levied on millions ought to be simple and easy for ordinary people to understand. As for the assertion that the Government is making a present of many, many millions to the working-class taxpayer by altering the method, it is plain nonsense. The Treasury is most unlikely to suffer any real loss of revenue by the change. All that happens is that there will no longer be a theoretical—and uncollectable—levy on persons after the war, if their incomes rise or fall, on the basis of their wartime earnings.

### Youth Service

Those who desire to regiment all young people after the war into a compulsory Youth Service on the Nazi or Fascist model will derive no encouragement from the Report just published by the Youth Advisory Council of the Board of Education. In this Report, proposals for the compulsory organisation of youth and the compulsory regulation of youth's leisure are denounced in round terms; and there is a salutary insistence both on the need for providing full liberty for young people to employ their leisure in their own way and on the exceeding diversity of youthful tastes and interests. The conclusion is that there must

be partnership in providing for the needs of youth between local education authorities and voluntary associations, and that there must be no uniform pattern for this partnership in different areas and no sharp demarcation of spheres. The need for increased financial help to the voluntary movements is recognised; and there is a special insistence on the necessity of making proper provision of premises where youth activities can be carried on and of reserving for youth work a large number of the Service camps which will be vacated at the end of the war. Stress is laid on the need for reducing, even during the war, the hours of labour allowed for juveniles; and it is insisted that after the war provision must be made for allowing each young person at least a month's holiday every year, with pay, at least a fortnight to be continuous during the spring and summer. Desirous as the Council is of developing youth activities, it is no less set against any scheme that would isolate youth from the rest of the community or concentrate all youth work in special centres apart from the general community centres which it expects to be built. This is an excellent Report, of which we hope Mr. Butler will take notice. Incidentally, it pronounces in favour of a school-leaving age of 16 as soon as possible, and insists that part-time education up to 18 ought to be thought of not as a mere release from industry for so many hours a week, but as a prior claim.

## PARLIAMENT: WOMAN-POWER

Most of the two-day debate on man-power concerned the registration of women from 46 to 50. (The main coal discussion will come as soon as the House returns from the further recess—"holiday," Eden called it by a slip—which 99 Members voted they should not have.) It was a vigorous and interesting debate, though some of the clichés became monotonous: Bevin always uses a "fine-tooth comb"; interviewers are "chits of girls"; calling-up of older women was even, snorted Sir H. Morris-Jones, "a definite blot on the Minister's escutcheon." The opposition was less exclusively Tory than had been anticipated: Geordie Buchanan made a strong sentimental case against the soullessness of local exchanges ("They do not consider that behind every transference there is a woman with a human soul"); the House did not think that W. J. Brown's authoritative account of waste of man-power in the Civil Service was answered adequately by Assheton's Treasury brief.

Bevin was a humane steam-roller. Besides his, two speeches stood out. Ellis Smith spoke for the Labour Party: not a highly original speech, but warm, broad, comprehensive—truly and sanely working-class. Sir Ralph Glyn is an open-minded Tory: his speech was sensible and pleasantly gossipy. When he said that Russian workers "took pride in the fact that they got no more pay than the soldier in the Red Army," he had the exceptional grace to add that the case was different here, since industry belonged to the nation.

Dr. Russell Thomas initiated an intensely physiological discussion on the Change of Life, dinging thyroid enlargement, gastric disturbances and "hot flushes" at the Minister's rugged head. Miss Rathbone, like other women Members, said that he, like other men, was talking nonsense: women should be called up right up to 65. Kenneth Lindsay wanted to know why advertisements begging youths to become miners had been inserted in the *Financial Times*; Bevin could not say without notice.

When the House adjourned Members were still mulling over the "big" debate, and in particular Aneurin Bevan's sharp brush with Eden on the bombing of Milan and Turin after (as Bevan alleged) surrender negotiations had begun. Eden denied this warmly, giving dates, and certainly carried the House. Scrutiny of his dates shows that Turin was bombed after the Italian envoy had arrived in Madrid and the Foreign Office had been informed of his arrival (and, presumably, that he was fully accredited), but just before negotiations actually began. A close thing—on the facts alone, apart from the argument on justification.

PONTIFEX MINOR

# RUSSIA WRITES HISTORY

GENERAL SMUTS recently declared that the Russian offensive, now in its twelfth week, would change the course of human history. He was not paying another rhetorical compliment to the Red Army. He was expressing his opinion that the issue of the war is being decided on the Eastern Front in favour of the U.S.S.R., and the results of a Soviet victory would be irrevocable. Germany's pretensions to world leadership and domination would be frustrated; the U.S.S.R. would be brought finally on to the stage as one of the greatest World Powers, and the era of balance of power politics centred mainly in Europe would be at an end.

On July 5th the Germans flung their maximum concentration of armour against the broad salient gained by the Russians last winter west of Kursk. That they hoped to repeat their 1942 penetration towards the heart of Russia is most unlikely. Almost certainly their objectives were limited to dealing the Red Army a crippling blow and to recovering Kursk, the lost bastion in a line, Orel-Byelgorod-Taganrog, at whose retention, if possible with local improvements, they had to aim if the enlarged Reich were to withstand the Allies' blockade *plus* attrition-bombing in the West. For if that line, uncomfortably long but well-consolidated, proved to be untenable, they would be forced to abandon the resources, essential to the Reich's self-sufficiency, of the Ukraine.

The German attack failed disastrously. On July 13th the Russian counter-offensive began, with a series of widely separate, carefully timed thrusts, aimed first at Orel, then at Kharkov, next at Taganrog, then towards the Desna west of Kursk. The success of each thrust threatened local envelopments; the Germans had either to effect a general withdrawal or be destroyed. By the end of August Orel, Kharkov and Taganrog had fallen; on the whole front between Smolensk and the Sea of Azov the German armies were in retreat. It was not a rout; and, though German rearguard losses in delaying actions were undoubtedly severe, the Russians made no large claims to captures of men and material. But though the German armies, greatly weakened, avoided disintegration, they failed to disengage from their pursuers. Moreover, the plan adopted for their withdrawal was an illustration how economic and political requirements can overrule sound military strategy. For a decision was evidently taken to narrow the front and save man-power by falling back to the line of the upper Dnieper, north of Kiev, but nevertheless to hold the 600 miles of the Dnieper salient between Kiev and Kherson. Why? Partly to retain the grain and vitally important manganese of the western Ukraine, but, above all, to keep the war away from Rumania and the Balkans.

This decision, which involved for the Wehrmacht the holding of a front at least as long as that from which they were driven in July, enabled the Russians to secure in September a position of great strategic advantage. While their left wing harried the belated German evacuation of the Kuban and the Crimea and compressed the Southern Group of German armies into the Dnieper loop, the main weight of their offensive reached Kiev and began to drive the Germans up against the Pripet marshes between Kiev and Mogilev. Farther north, their right wing (aided by the capture of Smolensk) was moving rapidly forward towards Vitebsk, Orshla and the north-east fringe of the Pripet marshes. Thus, with the autumn front cut in two by the Pripet, and the whole immense Dnieper salient threatened by disaster (since Russian progress south-westwards from Kiev would cut every railway linking the Ukraine with Warsaw) the German High Command is faced with an appalling dilemma. They may hope that the weather and demolitions will give them a few weeks' breathing space; but a winter campaign on a line so extended as the Dnieper means catastrophe. Is a withdrawal, then, to be ordered to a radically shorter line, capable of consolidation by depleted divisions? That would be the logical, military solution; but it means a retreat to Riga—Brest Litovsk—Przemysl—Carpathians, a retreat which involves not merely the evacuation of Estonia and Latvia, but the exposure of Rumania and the Danube. For a prolongation of the front down the Dniester covering Rumania would deprive the retreat of its essential gain, the shortening of the defensive line.

From this dilemma Germany has now no escape. If the Wehrmacht stands on the periphery of Hitler's Grossraum it will be destroyed by an enemy superior in fighting qualities, generalship and material. If it retreats to the Curzon Line, the Red Army will sweep over the Balkans to Vienna; and the contracted Reich will starve. Let the timing of future developments be as it may, the ultimate issue is already decided.

For the Western Allies the immediate need is to appreciate what is happening on the Eastern Front and to adjust their plans and policies in the light of the Russian victories. By their own military action they can accelerate Germany's collapse; and (since European civilisation may totally disintegrate in a protracted death-agony of Fascism) there is an urgent call for much more Allied initiative. It is questionable, however, in view of past failures in the planning of priorities, whether Anglo-American effort on the Continent can now be made more than a limited, though useful, diversion contributory to the triumph of the U.S.S.R. It follows that the main task for British and American statesmen is to ensure, politically, that Russian victory brings not merely the defeat of the Wehrmacht, but conditions in which the foundations of durable peace for Europe can be laid. These conditions are economic and social as well as political, but there are immediate political decisions that must be made now. The Allies must face the controversial issues which Russian victory will raise. These include the status, political complexion and frontiers of Poland and the Balkan States.

The U.S.S.R. has not a monopoly of wisdom in world statecraft; both Britain and the United States (terms not necessarily synonymous with those countries' existing Governments) are entitled to opinions as to the wise reconstruction of a Continent which war has brought—materially, politically and spiritually—to the verge of dissolution. Agreement will not be easily reached; there is a deadly heritage of misunderstanding and mistrust in the way. Its attainment will be possible on one condition only: negotiations between the Western Allies and Russia must be conducted with the utmost frankness and sincerity. Conferences in which the Anglo-American approach is "cagey" and defensive will serve only to deepen Russian disbelief in the good faith of their Allies. The most dangerous course is that most easily pursued by diplomats—to oppose solutions they dislike, but which they have not in the last resort either the power or the will to resist. We can do no worse service to the Poles, for instance, than to encourage ambitions which we cannot in any case support. Their future depends on their reaching an accommodation with the Soviet Union, not on the amount of pressure they can exert in London or Washington. If Britain and America are clear about issues which seem to them of vital importance they will be able to play their full share in all the issues of European settlement; if they take their stand on false issues they will inevitably give way with the worst grace and after arousing the maximum of suspicion in Russia and the maximum of resentment among clients whom they desired to help. Lack of clarity in formulating policy will be readily interpreted as inimical fencing for position. On the other hand, Stalin knows well that Russia has much to lose by antagonising the West. Lord Beaverbrook's realism might be a help in such discussions. With a Canadian accent he can talk the same language as Stalin and cares nothing for the old-world technique of diplomacy.

# A LONDON DIARY

LORD BEAVERBROOK out of office must seem to Mr. Churchill a dangerous waste of talent, and I am not at all surprised that he has used an unexpected opportunity to have his friend back again where he wants him. Various explanations are given for the appointment. Lord Beaverbrook, they say, is to be peripatetic emissary for Washington or Moscow, as convenience dictates. He has unbounded admiration for Stalin, and Stalin no doubt finds him realistic and dynamic. Further, while he is in office and doing a useful job in arranging details of Allied co-operation, the critical tendencies of his newspapers are less pronounced; as a member of the Government he cannot vigorously run propaganda for the second front. Equally important, perhaps, is the fact that the Premier enjoys Lord Beaverbrook's company and wants to confide in him; this is easier if he is a Minister first and a newspaper proprietor second. As to the other appointments, the important question is whether Mr. Attlee is now to preside over the Lord President's Committee—which is really the Home Cabinet—and whether Sir John Anderson, as Chancellor, will feel obliged to be as good a representative as Sir Kingsley Wood of those vested interests that dominate the Conservative party. I should expect Sir John to be rather less obstructive of social progress.

* * *

It sounded like old times to hear Mr. Churchill denouncing "Prussian Militarism" last week, and coupling it with Nazism. But much that was true about Prussia before 1914 went out of date pretty completely after 1918. The Prussia of the Hohenzollerns was the stronghold of an authoritarian and militaristic conservatism because its Diet, which anyhow had limited powers, was elected by the famous Three-Class Franchise—perhaps the most ingenious, but also the most iniquitous form of propertied franchise that Old-World Europe could show. But from 1919 onwards, when it got universal and equal franchise, Prussia became the most advanced—one might even say the most radical—State in the Reich. Throughout the fourteen years of the Republic it was governed by Left Coalitions with the Social Democrats as the dominant party. It voted Left right up to the final crisis at the end of 1932, when von Papen made his coup d'état and overthrew them with Hindenburg's help. This, after all, is not surprising, for while Prussia contains in the north, rural areas dominated by the great Junker estates, it also includes the most densely peopled industrial districts, whose workers in those days voted pretty solidly Socialist or Communist. Hamburg was, after Vienna, the most advanced of the great cities of Europe in its political opinions. Berlin and the Ruhr towns were not far behind it.

* * *

In this matter of Prussia, and in some others, we shall have to get our views of Germany up to date before we think out the settlement after this war. Prussia was never the Nazi stronghold. It so happens that not a single one of the chief Nazi leaders is a Prussian. Hitler and Bormann are Austrians: Göring, Himmler and Streicher are Bavarians; Goebbels is a Rhinelander, and Rosenberg a Balt, while Hess was brought up in Egypt. The enemy in Prussia is not the mass of the population, which tended by majority to vote Left, but the twin ruling caste of Junkers and the magnates of the Heavy Industrial Cartels. The way to deal with Prussia is not to dismember it, but to depose this governing caste. If, as a group of Tory M.P.s proposes, the Rhineland and Ruhr were cut away from the rest of the Reich, Prussia would move a good deal further to the Right. One obvious thing to do is what both Weimar and Hitler promised but never carried out—to break up the great feudal estates of the north.

* * *

While we are all wondering when, if ever, the Government will produce anything concrete in the shape of post-war plans, one active intelligence at least has evolved what seemed to my lay mind a promising plan for South Wales. Hitherto what has been suggested was too often the settling in this depressed area of miscellaneous industries, like watch-making, which have no relation to its resources and traditions. Thanks to that vigorous monthly *Scope*, I had the chance the other day of hearing Mr. W. C. Devereux on his very comprehensive scheme. He himself brought to this area one rather startling new industry in which he pioneered—the extraction of magnesium metal from sea-water. He begins by enumerating the few but abundant raw materials of this area—coal, limestone, shale, soda, sea-weed and sea-water. What he proposes to do with coal may be more or less familiar—its utilisation by the latest processes to yield oil fertilisers, smokeless fuel, plastics and sundry chemicals. More novel, at least to me, were his plans to use electric current in several metallurgical processes, with the aid of the other raw materials, to produce magnesium, aluminium, ferro-silicon, ferro-alloys and alumina. Only the bauxite would have to be imported. Whether the electric power could be supplied at a sufficiently cheap rate would depend on the skilful co-ordination of these several processes with other local demands such as power for tramways, so as to secure a steady load over the whole twenty-four hours. I was delighted to learn that Mr. Devereux went to work at an early stage to interest the Miners' Federation and the T.U.C. in his ideas. South Wales has natural resources enough. What its magnates (but not its miners) have hitherto lacked is imagination.

* * *

The sad news of Edouard Herriot's death—uncorruptible, fair-minded and gifted, he commanded more respect than any other French statesman—prematurely aged and broken-hearted, revives a recollection of the very different man with whom British Labour leaders were in touch when he was at the height of his success. It was shortly before the election which smashed Poincaré, brought the Left to power and paved the way for a reconciliation with the Weimar Republic. Herriot was confident and charged a friend of mine with some messages to the British Labour Government about the joint policy they might—and in fact did—pursue in Europe. But throughout the afternoon, what delighted my friend was much less his political views than the width of his interests. The host, one of Herriot's favourite lieutenants, Justin Godart—who by the way was one of the few Radical Ex-Ministers who dared not only to vote but to speak against the Vichy regime when it was set up—had just come back from Albania, bringing with him a bit of ancient sculpture with a broken Greek inscription. He set the company guessing what word of the right length would exactly fill the space in the fragmentary legend. Herriot on the instant supplied it, and a very good guess it was. Throughout the lunch and after it he was the life of the party, gay and at moments witty. He talked in a specially interesting way about music. I fancy that more of him went into his books on Beethoven and Mme Récamier than he ever put into his political speeches.

* * *

The National Peace Council has organised a remarkably interesting series of lunch-hour addresses on the "constructive problems of peace-making." They are to be given in the Kingsway Hall at 1.10 p.m., mainly on Fridays. The first is by the Dean of St. Paul's. Looking down the list, I notice lectures by Madariaga, Macmurray, Middleton Murray, Robert Boothby, Joad and Lancelot Hogben. One of the most useful should, I think, be that given by Professor Mitrani on November 12th. He is speaking on "Functional Co-operation as the Basis of Peace." Chatham House has published a pamphlet giving the same approach, and a good deal has appeared about it in this journal. To me, Professor Mitrani appears to be exploring the one line of advance that offers more than a temporary solution. Much more will be said about it in this journal in the near future. Perhaps the easiest way to explain it in one sentence is to refer to Henry Wallace's suggestion of a T.V.A. for the Danube Valley. The intractable problems of nationalism will not yield to direct assault. There is no way to solving minority or frontier problems by the redistribution of populations. The only solution lies in constructive economic institutions which make frontiers unimportant, and an economic policy (based preferably on land-lease) which increases the standard of life of the common people. Then Europeans will have a joint interest in peace instead of governments having separate interests in nationalist exclusiveness.

* * *

I was present the other day at a discussion amongst soldiers and A.T.S. which turned on the relations between British and American troops in that area. I was surprised how it all boiled down to one point. There was a lot of talk about the attitude of the American soldier to women, about the psychological effects of privates wearing an open collar, and the views of the two armies about each others' qualities in fighting and organisation. But by general consent the governing fact was the difference in pay. That was why the Americans and British did not become more matey. There was no suggestion of hostility—only of aloofness. The British cannot afford the rounds of drinks that the Americans easily pay for and they can give the girls a gayer time. The result is that you very seldom see American and British soldiers together. Those American authorities who have recently been urging that a far larger proportion of the pay of American soldiers be saved for them and their wives in the U.S. are, I am sure, on the right lines.

CRITIC

## THIS ENGLAND

**A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to A. E. Bevens.**

**Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.**

What a packet of trouble there would be if susceptible English youths went dancing every night with pretty and lady-like Malay, Chinese and Indian girls, and there are plenty of these about.

The colour bar nips this in the bud. Anyone who disregards the bar is ostracised. It is British mothers who ought to be most insistent on the colour bar being maintained.—*The Palmers Green and Southgate Gazette.*

Two comedians, who substituted the word "pansy" for "tulip" in a revue at Southend, were fined £10 each, with £5 5s. costs, at Southend, for "introducing lines which had not been approved by the Lord Chamberlain.—*Essex Chronicle.*

Councillor Reakes said that no one could correctly forecast the future, but a careful study of the trend of events indicated the prospects ahead being good, bad or indifferent.—*Wallasey News.*

Wanted, an electric chair and a bath chair for pony.—Advt. in *Times.*

## WOMAN-POWER

O WOMAN in the days of peace,
Mere toy of masculine caprice,
A drug upon the labour mart,
Not called upon to play thy part,
In war, so far as men allow
A positive sheet-anchor thou!
To-day, in Britain's finest hour,
Thou art described as woman-power,
Thou hast acquired mechanic skill
The ranks of absent men to fill;
But in the day of victory, when
Thou art superfluous again,
Thy wartime place thou must vacate
In the best interests of the State,
Admitting with submissive grace
That home is Woman's chosen place.

SAGITTARIUS

# HOW IT LOOKS IN SICILY

[The following letter reaches us from a lieutenant in the British Army in Sicily.]

From the flat roof of the castle where we are now installed the whole world breathes peace. We are 800 feet up on a rocky promontory which peers down into a semi-circle of the blue Tyrrhenian sea. Far out the islands of this northern coast are faint against a background of rising cumulus. Below us, running out to a narrow peninsula, is a fringe of yellow containing the blue. Behind is the fertile littoral where the trees are burdened with ripe fruit—grapes, figs, peaches, pears, the greater part of which is going to waste. Still farther back are the rugged range of mountains through which the road corkscrews.

The population of the fishing village below us is about a thousand and those not engaged in fishing get a living in the vineyards and orchards. The village has been bombed, but forewarned by pamphlets which preceded the bombs most of the population took to the hills and the casualties are few. It was most interesting to talk to them. When we arrived the greater part had returned to their homes (a few stragglers, mostly released prisoners of war, still trudged along the roads where, hot and hungry, they made a rather pitiable spectacle). The language was a difficulty at first but it was soon overcome. "Say, brother, have you got a cigarette?" or "Gee, it was helluva bombing," served as a reminder of one of the reasons why Mussolini's scheme for colonisation failed. The wandering Sicilian loves his home, as well he might.

When one's American fails there is French. The headmaster of the local school was overjoyed at being able to exercise his knowledge after three years. Rome was his spiritual home and he had been an unwilling slave to the Fascist machine. He gave an account of the German occupation much of which was as one would expect. The Sicilians did not want war. They hated the Germans, who had taken all their crops (including this year's harvest which they lifted before our arrival). Mussolini apparently had never succeeded in popularising himself in Sicily. One wizened old fisherman who looked up from beneath a boat asked me whether it was true that Sicily was to be incorporated in the British Empire after the war. He was very disappointed when I expressed my grave doubt. He, like many more that I met, seemed bewildered by the invasion.

The people of this coast are not starving, though they complain they are hungry and have been short since 1940. The chief deficiency seems to be wheat and sugar. Besides fruit, sweet corn and an assortment of vegetables (except potatoes) are to be had in plenty. Bully is less useful for purposes of exchange than cigarettes, and these have a greater value than B.M.A. lire. Indeed, to explain that the pound is worth four hundred lire is to realise the worthlessness of currency in a land where there is no bread. I was curious to know the reaction of the Sicilians to the war in general, but not surprisingly the war to them connoted Palermo, Catania, Messina and, in particular, their own village. The local bootmaker put the case for the people in these parts, which, it should be remembered, was comparatively untouched by war. He spoke with a Brooklyn accent. "I guess we were pleased to see you boys arrive. There'd be no war 'cept for the Big Shots." He thumbed to our temporary residence on the hill. "You boys put the Big Shots out?" he said hopefully. With my tongue in my cheek—or perhaps half in it—I assured him we would.

But this is a small section of the Sicilian coastline and it should not be imagined that elsewhere where war has left its mark that we are regarded as liberators. There, a wave of the hand is often met with a look of smouldering hate, a reminder that the Sicilian has both a pride of race and an independence of spirit.

For obvious reasons I have not written of the fighting and the great things that have been done here. One incident, however, really is worthy of mention. A friend of mine described to me with some emotion how his men before they attacked sat down and divided their rations with bombed-out children in the full knowledge that they would have to wait a long time for more. These things I shall carry in my head. I shall remember the blueness of the sea, and the schoolmaster who so badly wanted to talk in French. I shall remember Mount Etna at evening as it turned from a nameless blue to amethyst, and the children who called "Biscuit, biscuit," and held out their hands as we passed on our way to war. But most of all, I think I shall remember for what it signified, the man with the Brooklyn accent who had such high hopes concerning the purpose of our visit.

# RECONSTRUCTION IN BRITISH FOREIGN TRADE

Calculations are being made on all hands of the very large increase that will be needed in British exports in order to meet the cost of necessary imports after the war. It is pointed out that the loss of many of our foreign investments will mean that we have to pay with current exports for a larger proportion of what we buy from abroad; that the "terms of trade" are likely to be less favourable to British exports in future than they were before the war; and that success in following a policy of "full employment" in this country will increase the demand for imports of all kinds. On the other side it is pointed out that markets lost during the war will be in many cases difficult to regain; that the Dominions, as well as certain foreign countries, will be found to have made large strides in industrialisation, and will produce for themselves many things they used to import; and that the countries which will stand in most need of imports will be for some time after the war is over in a very bad position for paying back in products of their own.

Indeed, in order to meet the case of the more backward or devastated countries, it is suggested that there will have to be a big post-war development of capital investment abroad, on terms which will not place undue burdens on the borrowers, and that it will be necessary for Great Britain to finance a large part of this investment, which will be of such a kind as to afford much needed employment to British industries capable of using their wartime arms-making capacity for the production of capital goods. It is not explained how a country which is finding great difficulty in exporting enough to pay for its current imports can, in face of this difficulty, become a considerable investor abroad. The two lines of thought are quite separately pursued, as if there were no connection between them.

It is, of course, quite possible for a country which is in deficit on its account for current international transactions to make foreign loans—provided that it can borrow from some source or other the financial resources needed for this purpose. Unless, however, it can borrow, it can invest only out of a surplus arising as a result of its current transactions. Those who contemplate that Great Britain after the war will be both a debtor in respect of the balance of import and export payments (including the "invisible" items) and an investor of capital overseas presumably mean that there will be countries from which Great Britain will be able to borrow enough not merely to cover a current deficit but also to provide a surplus for foreign lending.

Whence are such borrowings to come? It is hardly to be supposed that India or the Dominions will continue after the war to pile up balances in London. They are much more likely to need capital for their own internal development. Nor are there any foreign countries, except the United States, which are likely to have resources available for lending to Great Britain. It seems, therefore, that those who contemplate the situation described in the preceding paragraph must mean that after the war Great Britain will continue to borrow from the United States both to cover deficits on current international account and to procure resources for investment in the less developed parts of the world. Clearly, such a prospect fails to fit in with the prospect of "lease-lend in reverse"; for if we are to pay the United States back in goods for what we have had from them on lease-lend terms the prospective deficit on current account will be further swollen, as we shall be sending out a proportion of our exports without receiving any payment in return.

Realistic thinking on these lines leads to considerations so unpleasing that most people prefer to avoid it, and many even suggest that it ought to be avoided for fear of complicating or worsening Anglo-American relations. A real difficulty cannot, however, be evaded merely by refusing to think about it; and Anglo-American relations will be much more endangered if we allow the trouble to come upon us without trying to think out ways of meeting it. Let us, therefore, try to find out what are the fundamental considerations on which the correct answer must depend.

First, it seems unlikely that Great Britain will ever resume its position in the world as a considerable net investor of capital overseas. It is necessary at this point to draw a clear distinction between the export of *capital* and the export of *capital goods*. Ships, machinery, and other capital goods, regarded as exports, are no different from clothing, or coal, or whisky, or any other kind of export. They can be paid for with wheat, or iron ore, or wine, and can enter into the current balance of trade payments just like anything else. The complication arises when the capital goods are consigned to countries which have no means of paying for them on the nail with their own exports, and therefore desire to borrow them by way of capital loans. To the extent to which we can find purchasers able to pay on the nail for our exports of capital goods no difficulty arises: such exports merely enter into the current account. What we cannot do, unless we have a surplus on this account, is to lend capital goods on deferred terms of payment—that is, to make loans of *capital* to finance the purchases of our *capital goods*.

In the post-war period, it seems likely that Great Britain will be better equipped for supplying other countries with capital goods than with most kinds of consumers' goods. We are most unlikely to regain more than a fraction of our lost markets for cotton textiles, or to be able to expand substantially our sales of woollen goods, other textiles, or clothing. This may not be the case for a short period after the end of hostilities, when there is likely to be a world-wide shortage of consumers' goods; but it will apply in the long run, as soon as the short, post-war boom resulting from famine shortage comes to an end. Accordingly, we shall be compelled to pay in capital goods for a considerable proportion of the current imports which we shall need; and our ability to buy imports on the scale required for maintaining "full employment" at a satisfactory standard of living will depend on our success in selling capital goods in exchange. This we should be in a good position to do, both because the war industries can be turned over largely to efficient capital goods production and because, as the main market for many kinds of foodstuffs, we shall be well placed for persuading countries which want to sell us these foodstuffs to take our capital goods in exchange, and thereby to further the process of industrialisation which most of them desire to pursue.

It is, no doubt, often suggested that such a process as this must end in the destruction of our foreign trade by enabling our customers to become self-sufficient with the aid of the capital goods with which we supply them. This, however, is a foolish argument. The advance of industrialisation in a country is likely to mean, for a long time to come, not a smaller but a larger demand for imports. Countries do not develop, until a very advanced stage if at all, an all-round industrialisation. They specialise; and they

begin mainly by developing certain basic services, such as transport and other public utilities, extractive industries where they have mineral resources, and a fairly narrow range of consumers' goods production catering for common needs of their inhabitants. As they get wealthier through these forms of development, their power and their will to import from abroad a more diversified range of goods than they can produce for themselves, grow greater. They become better, not worse, customers of the more advanced countries.

It seems to follow that British post-war trade policy must allow freedom to strike bargains with developing countries for the exchange of their foodstuffs and raw materials against British manufactures, including capital goods. But can this be done without violating the principle loudly proclaimed by the American State Department that there must be "no discrimination"? The American view appears to be that it is entirely a matter for the Americans how high a tariff they impose on foreign products, provided they impose it equally upon all, but that any attempt by any country to drive any sort of bilateral bargain for the exchange of goods with any other is "discrimination," and becomes at once a matter of international concern, in which they have a right to interfere.

This line of argument cannot possibly be acceptable in this country. If we grant that the Americans have a right to impose what tariffs they please—and we do grant this—we must also claim on our own part a right to make such arrangements as may be necessary for the getting of imports which are needed for our prosperity, even if we can do this only by making bilateral bargains with the suppliers. Otherwise we may be faced with a situation in which the countries whose goods we buy refuse to take our goods in exchange, because the Americans can *lend* them the capital goods they want, whereas we can only afford to supply them in payment for current imports. The Americans after all are not faced with any prospect of a deficit on their current international account—quite the contrary. As long as they keep their high tariff, they are certain of a large surplus available for foreign lending. It may suit them very well in these circumstances to have the whole world as an open market for their capital goods. But what is to happen to us if we strip ourselves of the one instrument we have for ensuring that those from whom we buy shall receive our goods in exchange?

To put the case in this way is not to argue that bilateralism is in itself a good thing. Clearly it is not, any more than the American tariff is in itself a good thing. It would be much nicer if the whole world could be so arranged that no need for any tariffs or for any special trade bargains would arise. But the world is not so arranged, or likely to be in the near future. Accordingly, while we should endeavour to keep bilateral arrangements down to the minimum required for balancing our international accounts, we can no more forgo it altogether than the Americans are likely to abolish their tariff at a blow.

Of course, it is greatly to our advantage, as to that of every country, that the world as a whole, in national and international policies alike, shall pursue the objective of "full employment." If we do this, and other countries do not, the effect must be to increase our demand for imports and at the same time to reduce the market for our exports, and so to widen the prospective gap. If most countries do adopt "full employment" policies, the demand for imports may prove so expansive all the world over as to remove our problem, by enabling us to market enough exports to meet all our needs. We cannot, however, reckon on this; and we must therefore keep in our hands the power to make bargains designed to rectify the balance of our trading accounts. We must beware of being lured, by our desire to placate Mr. Cordell Hull, into throwing away incautiously an instrument of bargaining without which we shall be unable to maintain either "full employment" or a satisfactory standard of living for our people.

# FAMINE

*[In this article a British officer now serving in India describes his personal experience of the famine.]*

"THERE'S a famine down there," they told me. Probably people dying and so forth.

I knew that, of course—had read about it in the paper—but on the eve of my move I pigeonholed and forgot the information; the famine would, no doubt, be noticeable if it were real. Anyway, poverty is so ever present in India that forgetting is a protective armour. I left with no more than that half-warning in my head.

On the journey I had too much to do to think of the people or the country. This was a Company move, and I was responsible for 150 Indian troops from the hills, in land as foreign to them as it was to me. They could not speak this language; they had never seen quite this sort of landscape before. Yet, quickly they were bored with it all—the long travelling hours, the awkward changes, the carrying of kit and stores, the rain and the general discomfort.

After a couple of days of slow journeying, we changed trains at a fair-sized junction. Fires were started and food prepared on the platform. I had to make some arrangements, and when I returned the men were all eating. This was the first time I saw the beggars. They were not like other Indian beggars, calling for an anna from a passing train. These people did not ask for money. They wanted food, and they stood there watching the men of their own nation cooking and eating. I counted about 30 of these beggars as they clustered on the railway line between the two platforms; they were of all ages and in one condition; the majority were women; some were blind and all were ill. One old man, tall, with a fine head and straggly beard was being led by a woman; his sightless eyes looked up high over the heads of those squatting on the platform. Some of the beggars were silent and a very few were still; most were watching closely, for occasionally, as a man finished his food, he would walk to the edge and sweep the scraps on to the line. The watchers, who had drawn closer, rushed forward then and scraped in the dirt for the few grains of rice, until they were driven back by a couple of railwaymen. The blind old man, at these times, hearing the movement and the shouts, made a low noise rather like a whine, perhaps an echo of days when he had been a prosperous beggar. For the more romantic of my readers I say with reluctance that this old man had no more dignity than the others. His head was lifted and twisted on a scraggy neck; he was very dirty and his rags revealed no suspicion of former beauty. He was hungry. Like the other beggars he had a small cloth and a tin which he held out for scraps. The men of my Company were rather embarrassed and when I arrived were giving the remains of their food in a hurried way, as though the giving were distasteful. I watched this scene for a short while and then, as more men finished their food and the crowd began to fight among themselves, I stopped this indiscriminate scattering of food and had the scraps placed in a box to be distributed later. But I had forgotten one member of the Company—the goat. He had been given his ration separately on a small plate. But that day, he was fussy. He had a few mouthfuls, nibbled the rest, turned away, thought again and managed a little more. Then with a rather distant look, deploring the standard of wartime rations, he stalked away. Within ten seconds, a small crowd of men and women were fighting over the remnants of his meal.

We left that place with few regrets and soon after approached our destination. All along the line we met these train beggars—railway stations seem to be the hope of those who can walk from their village. The children were the most pitiful; naked boys and girls with no flesh or large pot-bellies lined the train. Yet they were the least worried, the least intense about their begging. Whether it is the ignorance or the optimism of youth I cannot tell, but it was easy to raise a smile. What they most wanted was the army "bishcoot."

Arriving at our destination, we settled in, the Company being split up. My main job was travelling from one platoon to another, making sure they understood their new duties and fixing quarters and ration arrangements.

One day I went into a stationmaster's office to borrow his timetable. I sat facing him, my back to the door, when I heard someone come in and stand beside me. I looked up. He was a tall Indian, not very well dressed, rather the ordinary type of matriculate in the middle twenties that abounds in India. But he spoke excellent English. He stood still and straight and over my shoulder spoke to the stationmaster. "Excuse me"—courteously, not apologetically—"there is a man on the platform out there in a dying condition. I thought he was dead, but there is some movement. Is there anything you can do? I will gladly pay the cost."

The stationmaster did not appear to have heard, and continued to make entries in a large book spread out in front of him. The other waited. After about a minute the stationmaster finished writing, blotted the last words and reached for a small scrap of paper, on which he scribbled a sentence. Without turning his head he shouted:

"Oh, Chowkidar!"—An old man appeared.

"Take this," the stationmaster said in his language, "and give it to the policeman on duty."

Then he turned to the stranger.

"The police will take care of him," he said.

The other turned to go and then stopped.

"Will he be taken to the hospital?" he asked.

The stationmaster grew angry.

"The police know what to do," he said shortly. The tall Indian, still obviously dubious, left the room.

"Do you get many of them?" I asked the stationmaster.

"Two or three a day," he answered in the same tone. "We can do nothing."

About ten minutes later I left and had lunch in the station refreshment room—a plate heaped high with eggs, fish, bread, bacon and beans, costing Rs.1.8. An hour later, I strolled on to the platform to look for my train.

The dead man was still there. He was lying half in a pool of water, near the edge of the platform on his back, his face uncovered, except for the flies. He was not old, in rags, the skin stretched over his bones. What movement his discoverer had seen had most certainly ceased. I spoke to a naked little boy on the platform—which was full, though no one was paying any attention to the body.

"Is he dead?" I asked.

The child's face lit up and he smiled.

"Oh, yes," he said, "he's dead."

Two days later I came through the same station and stopped again to change trains. About five yards from where the dead man had lain was another body—this time the face was covered. I went to see the stationmaster.

"There's another dead man there," I told him.

"I know," he answered as before, "the sweepers will take it away." I suppose I looked what I felt, for suddenly his reserve went and he talked rapidly, his English suffering a little.

"What can we do?" he said. "We can do nothing. Every day they come here and die. Two and three of them. For us there is nothing to do. They get no food in the village that used to support them. Mostly they are people with no land and no family. They suffer the first. The other day, let me tell you something. I was there sitting in my office when an old man and a little girl came right inside, the little girl begging for food. I was about to turn them out, when the old man dropped dead at my feet. Right at my feet. Just dropped dead. What could I do? I gave the little girl some money for food. Before night she was dead also."

"And I will tell you something," he added, "that little girl was the same age as my little girl. That's what I thought. She's the same age as my little girl."

# NORMAL LIFE

DE QUINCEY, in his essay on the knocking at the door in *Macbeth*, expresses the opinion that the effectiveness of this is due to our feeling that the current of ordinary life has been suspended by the unnatural murder of Duncan and that, at the moment of the knocking, "the suspension ceases and the goings-on of human life are suddenly renewed." "When the deed is done," he continues, "when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds; the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human mind has made its reflux from the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them."

Some people may feel that the word "goings-on" is more applicable to the activities of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth than to the knocking at the gate that disturbed the porter at Inverness Castle. But De Quincey is probably right in suggesting that there is something in the human make-up that finds at once relief from abnormality and intensification of the sense of tragedy in the swift resumption of ordinary life, even for a brief interval, after a catastrophe that has darkened the daylight. The ordinary man has a craving for the ordinary and, even in times of disaster—all the more, perhaps, in days of disaster—welcomes its reappearance as once was welcomed the sight of a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand.

There is something in the spirit of man that refuses to accept tragedy and catastrophe as normal. The spirit of man is possibly wrong: the history books differ on this point from the sentimental novelists. In the Black-and-Tan era, Terence MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, when he was asked by an English journalist what he thought of the Irish situation, replied: "Normal. More normal that it has been since the days of Queen Elizabeth." Yet at this time he was sitting in the mayoral chair of a predecessor who had been murdered by the police, and he himself was on the run and in danger of assassination. It was said that there was an underground passage by which he could escape from the City Hall in case it was raided. But the world in which he lived was peaceless, perilous and violent. Most of us would have described it as utterly abnormal and wished for a good end to it and the return of an eventless civilisation of chatter and tea-shops. Perhaps MacSwiney himself would have admitted that this, rather than guerilla war, was the normal world, and would have explained that insurrection was normal only in a nation that was subject to foreign rule. I remember once meeting one of the most extreme of his lieutenants who confided to me his opinion that the chief end of life was to read the poets and observe the beauties of nature. It seemed an odd confession, coming from a man who had been prosecuted for having been caught with sticks of gelignite under his bed. But obviously, as a philosopher, he realised that, in comparison with the world of trees and mountains and birds and wild flowers, keeping sticks of gelignite under the bed was abnormal.

Even then, indeed, the craving for ordinary things was shown by the continuity of sports and games. I.R.A. judges in illegal courts would abandon the dispensation of justice for a day in order to attend a race-meeting. I saw a man one day at Athenry organising a railway hold-up because armed police had taken their seats in a train. I saw him on the following Sunday in Galway, a passionate spectator at a football match, shouting objurgations from the touchline at the referee who had given a decision against the Athenry team. He was, I suppose, what would now in some parts of Europe be called a "partisan"; but he was a partisan, not only in the angry violence of insurrection but in the relatively friendly violence of the football field.

England in time of war has shown a similar desire not to allow the pleasures of the peace-time world to be totally obscured, even by the titanic catastrophe that has fallen on European civilisation. There were a few people who at one time demanded that racing should be suspended till the end of the war; but it was pointed out that soldiers were among those who most enjoyed the relaxations of a race-meeting, and that for their sake, at least, racing should be allowed to continue. Betting, it is said, instead of being discouraged by the seriousness of our times, has doubled in volume since 1939. There are fewer dog-race meetings, but last year the sum "invested" on the totalisators rose to £22,753,770, passing all records. I wonder what games the Romans played when Hannibal was camped in Capua. Perhaps they made bets on the duration of the war, as many Englishmen have done during the last four years. It is said that bookmakers no longer lay bets on the war; but in the first eighteen months, when business was still bad, many of them would accept wagers, not only on the duration of the war, but on such matters as the number of siren-warnings that would be sounded on a particular day, the number of German aeroplanes that would be brought down, and the nature of Hitler's end. The betting-man will probably still be betting on the day of the Last Trump. He will be found, no doubt, offering to lay six to four on his chances of getting past Saint Peter. For the betting man is one of the world's optimists.

Much as I am in favour of keeping life as normal as possible even in its petty pleasures, I confess my blood ran a trifle cold as I read a story in the *Sunday Express* the other day about a sweepstake recently organised in an Essex public-house at the time of the one o'clock news. The story ran:

> From a radio set the B.B.C.'s six "pips" are sounded and the announcer begins the news.
>
> Everybody stops talking. The radio is turned on to full blast. The pub's staff gather round the set.
>
> A few minutes of rapt attention, and then the listeners pounce on one item of news. "Who's won it? Who's won it?"
>
> The rest of the news does not matter—they have merely been waiting for a figure; the figure which decides the result of their latest sweepstake.
>
> It happens that the winner is in the bar. Chorus of congratulation, loud laughter and drinks all round.

And the reporter added:

> What was the figure, the figure that won the money? *Forty-eight. Forty-eight R.A.F. planes missing in the previous night's raid on Berlin.*
>
> And a cheerful toast was drunk—to the man who gambled on forty-eight planes and the lives in them.

Readers of "This England" know that many incredible things happen between the English Channel and the Irish Sea; but I confess I should have found it easier to believe in the existence of the Loch Ness monster than in the existence of those unimaginative monsters who could uproariously take part in a sweepstake about the mortality of men who were giving their lives for them. This is not normal life, but death of the soul—death of the soul due to the ultimate evil, want of imagination. It is the only bet of which I ever heard that horrified me and almost convinced me that betting may be a sin.

Not that games and gaming, however innocent, are a universal means of continuing normal life in abnormal years. The permanent interests of men and women are various and of a wide range, with philosophy at one end of the scale and darts, perhaps, at the other. Painting and music have their assiduous devotees no less than the cinema. There are some who would rather watch geese on a pond than human beings on a football field. Others take more pleasure in growing tomatoes than in growing wise. But the conspicuous fact is that, whatever a man's idle interests may be in the quiet times of peace, they continue to be his interests so far as he can manage this, even when history has begun to add a new chapter to its long record of breaches of the normal life.

To many of us a few years ago it seemed incredible that Spaniards should still be flocking to the cinemas during the siege of Madrid, and the tangoes that we heard from Bilbao on the wireless seemed poignantly out of tune with the events that we read of in the newspapers. But later on the same paradoxes of behaviour were to be seen in England. How increasingly loud became the clamour against the shutting of the theatres and cinemas at the beginning of the war! The people, we were told, must be amused even in wartime—especially indeed in wartime—and the wireless kept doing its best to enliven them with songs about hanging up the washing on the Siegfreid Line and with piping "Bonny Bobby Shafto" in programme after programme.

By the time that Germany invaded Russia, England had achieved so much of normality in its amusements that one sometimes wondered whether the Russians would not be shocked by such levity and regard the continued popularity of horse-racing and dog-racing as a proof that the English were not taking the war seriously. Later, however, one heard that the Russians, too, had maintained at least a small fragment of normal life on the very edge of disaster, and that even in Stalingrad there were companies of players and dancers to entertain the fighting men with peace-time pleasures.

All this, it seems to me, shows that human beings have an instinctive feeling that war and catastrophe are impermanent things and that the great and small pleasures of ordinary life are parts of a more enduring world than they. This may be an illusion, but it is probably up to a point a good illusion. Even in our view of the weather, we are inclined to think of gales, thunderstorms and fogs as aberrations of nature and of pleasant weather as the norm and as something to which we have a natural right. The human race has been described as a race of wishful thinkers in wishful blinkers, and unquestionably it has preserved a more or less steady faith in the enjoyableness of life—its enjoyableness at intervals even to-day to be succeeded by the much greater enjoyments of to-morrow.

The smallest trifle sets this optimism going again. The sun comes out, a Brown Hairstreak butterfly flutters among the rose leaves, and we all become temporary Panglosses. A heron flies leisurely high overhead, and the sky, instead of being filled with war, becomes serene as in Arcadia. A chiff-chaff sings in September and normality has returned if only for a moment. This seems to be true even at the apical crisis of history. So mortals were created. So, no doubt, they will continue to be till the race perishes. Y.Y.

## TWO CONCERTS

THE last of the three concerts devoted to the work of Debussy and Fauré started off badly, with a most indifferent performance of Debussy's *Suite Bergamasque* by that intelligent pianist, Miss Margaret Good. After that one settled down to enjoy six of Fauré's *Mélodies*, sung by Miss Sophie Wyss to words by Verlaine. These had been heard at the previous concerts in Debussy's settings; but it would, I feel, have been even more interesting to hear both sets successively in the same concert, particularly as on this occasion the poems were first declaimed (with impeccable taste) by M. Jacques Duchesne. Comparing these settings from memory, I should say that the palm usually—but not invariably—goes to Debussy. Both formally and melodically Fauré may at first appear the more attractive, but Debussy will in the end be found to have got nearer the centre of the poet's meaning. To the 'cello sonatas (Fauré's, op. 117, Debussy's composed as late as 1915), which were juxtaposed in this concert, I think the same criticism may be applied. The first movement of the Fauré resumes the strength and weakness of this most elegant of composers. The strength lies in the melodic fitness and the clear texture, the weakness in a rhythm so persistently mellifluous and unbroken that the surface tends to appear featureless. This is a drawback usually associated less with homophonic music than with busy counterpoint of a second-rate order; but Fauré is an exception to most rules, and triumphs all along the line by a sort of exquisite courtesy that keeps innocence unimpaired throughout a very complete experience.

The Debussy sonata is a different matter. This is

an extremely difficult work to listen to—difficult in proportion to its greatness. Like those 'cello sonatas of Beethoven, op. 102, or the Fourth Symphony of Sibelius, this is one of those mature works of genius which at first dismay, then gradually seize one by their rugged concentration and brevity, the aphoristic depth of their phraseology, their refusal of all surface amenity. The beauty thus achieved is probably the most enduring of all kinds, and requires for its interpretation an elastic ease of technique and an exact sense of tonal proportions. Mr. William Pleeth, if not in the front rank of living 'cellists, rose very successfully to this occasion. Miss Sophie Wyss sang with taste and beauty of tone.

"*Voilà bien de la mauvaise musique bien écrite,*" a well-known critic once exclaimed after a performance of some chamber music by Saint-Saëns. The Piano Quartet of the Swedish Gunnar de Frumerie, which opened the first of Messrs. Boosey & Hawkes's autumn concerts, provoked the same thought in my mind. This is the kind of music—international, eclectic, harmonically "safe"—that used to win the Prix de Rome with such depressing regularity. M. de Frumerie is evidently a talented musician and can write a striking passage here and there; but his quartet is painfully diffuse and academic, and the temptation to allow the strings to march up and down in octaves, while the piano does the filling in, is a characteristic trap into which the composer has fallen. By contrast the string quartet, op. 49, by Shostakovitch, sounded like real music; but, thinking it over, I doubt if it is worth a great deal. The dryness of the first two movements seemed to have too little thought to justify it; what music there was ran out into the sand. The muted serenade toyed with charm; but the whole quartet, which one is glad to have had an opportunity of hearing, showed this often so remarkable composer in a mood of uncertainty. The Five Pieces from Bartok's *Microcosmos*, set for string quartet by Tibor Serly, were far more enjoyable. Even at his slightest—as here—Bartok is an obvious master. Beauty, shot with strangeness, exhales from the evanescent romanticism of this music, the technical difficulties of which were ably overcome by the Hirsch ensemble. It seemed a mistake to conclude a programme of this kind with Elgar's String Quartet. It is a work of much discreet charm, but—like most of Elgar's music—it can be made to sound smug by unsuitable surroundings.

In concluding this article I should like to draw attention to the excellent work of the London Philharmonic Arts Club, which meets every Monday and Friday in the Regent Street Polytechnic. This club, open to non-members on payment of a small sum, exists primarily for the hearing of all kinds of music which, for one reason or another, rarely achieves public performance. Fridays are usually devoted to programmes of recorded music, Mondays to "live recitals" by some of the best executants available. The meetings are at 7.30 p.m. and often include a discussion of the music performed. It would be difficult to imagine a better method of stimulating an informed attitude to music in general, and of developing a sense that the best music is not invariably the easiest to listen to. A venture of this kind must not be allowed to peter out. Those who are interested should write to the Secretary, 295 Regent Street. EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

## PLAYS AND PICTURES

### "My Sister Eileen," at the Savoy

It is a thousand pities that Mr. Firth Shephard did not try to persuade the Columbia Film Corporation to keep their version of *My Sister Eileen* in cold storage until he had his production on the boards. Not that the farce at the Savoy isn't good; it is very good indeed. But if we hadn't memories of Rosalind Russell, who can convey more with a twitch of an eyelash than the average actress with her entire body, and the greatest bunch of character players in Hollywood, we might have thought it a great farce. However, we must be thankful for any change from the stock formula's—babies and baby-grands, adjoining bedrooms and the inevitable mothers-in-law—offered by English authors. This is different and delightfully so. Two sisters, a magnetic fluffy blonde and an industrious brunette, who seek fame in New York, are enticed into renting a basement studio from a certain Mr. Appopulous, who promises to return their rent if they are not satisfied after a month. A few minutes after handing over the money they are far from pleased when they discover that the studio rocks from floor to ceiling every hour or so owing to the new subway which is being blasted underneath. They beg him to return the money, but he assures them that after living there for a while they will grow quite used to it. Then the fun begins. There is no lock on the door. The window is so large that anybody can, and does, walk through: drunks, police, shady ladies, the flotsam and jetsam of Greenwich Village drop in and constantly upset the careers of the two girls. When things turn out right for them eventually, Mr. Appopulous gets them to sign on for another three months with the promise that the blasting has stopped.

And as the curtain falls they discover to their horror "drilling" has just begun. This nonsense is beautifully played by Miss Sally Gray and Miss Carol Browne as the two sisters, and Mr. Max Bacon as Appopulous. It's not their fault if at times the American dialogue falls oddly from their lips. The piece is expertly directed by Mr. Marcel Varnel.

### The Negro Choir

The American Army Negro Choir, which sang in the Albert Hall on Tuesday night, reached a superb standard of beauty and of drama. Well-known spirituals like *Go Down Moses, Steal Away* and *Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho*, took their place amongst a number of those rare and equally moving folk melodies, sung unaccompanied. The combination of control and passion had a staggering effect. This music was evoked by subtle hand movements of the negro conductor who dispensed with a baton. Roland Hayes, who sang some of the solos, also gave remarkable renderings of arias from Bach and Arne. Earl Robinson's *Ballad for Americans*, which wove negro music into what the author describes as "a modern cantata," was unexpectedly successful. Much of the credit was due to the extremely fine voice of Kenneth Cantril. The *Daily Express* and the United States Army are jointly to be congratulated on a first-class enterprise.

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We regret that in our article on the Greek Exhibition we referred to its being held under the auspices of the Royal Hellenic Society and British Council; this should have read Greek Government and British Council.

## FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS—AUGUST, 1943

We rest unmoved, complacent, dumb,
Nor murmur in our dreams to hear
That thousand-throated tympanum,
Which fills each peaceful night with fear.

We do not catch a quickened breath,
Nor tremble, nor awake and pray
As swarm above the hordes of death
That pass upon their hellish way.

We heed not as that omen dread
For loveliness in cities far
Thunders its portent overhead
Convicted by each watching star.

Man's one pretention feeds the flame,
The glimpse of God is fugitive;
We care not though the world proclaim
That Beauty died that we might live.

While sheets of death remorseless fall,
Companions of Man's nobler state
Expect their last, most tragic call,
The helpless hostages of hate.

All, all forgot . . . ! Tradition's past,
Christ's Cross and Love's philosophy . . .
But the bell tolls for us at last
—It is ourselves we crucify.

PETER HUTTON

CENSORSHIP REGULATIONS allow readers to post this paper to any part of the British Empire (excepting Eire and Northern Ireland) and to any country of the American Continent (excepting dependencies of enemy-occupied countries) but readers are advised to consult a Post Office or a newsagent before attempting to post elsewhere.

# Correspondence

## INDIAN FAMINE

SIR,—On Friday morning I read Mr. Catlin's suggestion to assist the people of Bengal by inaugurating a public subscription. Surely this is a matter about which our Government should act swiftly and without hesitation, to bring real and immediate relief to the hungering people. Public subscription, or charity, should not be allowed in this case because we, that is our Administration, are supposed to be preparing India for self-government, and we should feel acutely on this issue, which is within our own house.

The redistribution of food within India, as suggested, evidently cannot bring any great relief to the stricken area, as reports already indicate a shortage of food in the rest of the country.

The nearest Allied territories which have any food reserves should be asked to cooperate immediately and to pass such reserves to the stricken area, drawing upon their neighbours to rebuild their depleted stocks. The neighbours thus depleted should borrow likewise until an area is reached where the deficiency can be met. Alternatively sea journeys could be undertaken by ships travelling from bases which can supply food in the necessary quantities. In either case the means of transport must be left to the authorities who can be the only judges at this time of the quickest and safest route.

I noted on the back page of a daily paper a few days ago two of the headlines: one concerning the Bengal famine, the other cheerfully announcing the huge surplus of wheat in Canada, after the bumper crops. Surely these two facts can be related to one another. We should be able to release at least enough shipping to send to the famished people enough to save their very existence, even at the cost of sacrificing some other urgent, but less immediate need.

This famine, if not combated immediately and successfully, will only give another lever to be used against our Administration, which is already the target of so much criticism. F.M.P.

## "ALIENS"

SIR,—Many of your readers may have seen the leading article in the London *Evening News* of September 17th, headed "The Briton's Shop," which began, "Traders in London and in other parts of the country are perturbed about the number of aliens who are opening shops and businesses while our own men are fighting on distant battlefields." "Aliens," says a Balham Councillor, "are getting preferential treatment over Englishmen in applying for licences." And so on and so forth for some 230 words.

From this leader, from a similar one which appeared in the *Daily Sketch*, and from long news items in many evening and daily papers, it would seem that the small shopkeeper—the backbone of British prosperity—is threatened by hordes of rapacious robber aliens who crept stealthily with evil intent into our fair land when no one was looking.

Imagine my surprise, therefore, to find on the front page of the *Evening News* of September 22nd the statement that from January 1st, 1942, to June 30th, 1943, not more than 30 (thirty) licences to open shops were granted to aliens, while altogether in that period 2,969 licences were granted.

Are we expected to believe that this "nation of shopkeepers" is threatened by the opening of 30 alien shops? Or rather is this not the kind of propaganda that leads to racial hatred, one of the things against which we are supposed to be fighting?

HARRY SHORT

6, Clydesdale Ave.,
Stanmore, Middlesex.

## THE HUNGARIAN OPPOSITION

SIR,—In your article of September 25th on the Opposition in Hungary you take up a stern and suspicious attitude towards the democratic workers, peasants and intellectuals organised as a People's Front. This "so-called Left opposition"—you suggest—may come in handy in Hungary to produce

a Badoglio who will appear innocent of the crimes of Horthy. Surely these forces are not responsible for the acts of a regime which has unceasingly oppressed them and against which they have unceasingly fought—all during the years while a Nazi regime, threatening torture and wholesale extermination, was looming right round the corner?

On my frequent visits to Hungary during the years 1920–1937 I have heard one name mentioned, more than any other, with hope, admiration and the love of people who, in their misery, had found a champion. It was the name of Rassay who stood out for the Jews, for decency and civic liberty. You call him an "unprincipled careerist," apparently because he was Minister of Justice under Horthy in 1919, even though his attitude during that brief period provoked an attempt on his life by groups of the Right. Your feelings against this man must be intense, since you even bring it up against him that he is of German origin, having been originally called Rasch. I do not know Rassay personally, but one of my friends, Professor Ignacius Pfeifer, whose outstanding figure was universally respected and trusted among Hungarian Liberals for the last 30 years, was a close and long-standing political associate of Rassay's. I cannot therefore accept your description and your suspicions of the latter without much more substantial evidence than you have given in your article.

In Budapest—not more than 30 miles from the Slovakian prisons of the Gestapo—books like Steinbeck's "The Moon is Down" and Solochov's "Quiet Flows the Don," have been among the best sellers during the past year, and a Hungarian edition of the Beveridge Plan has been widely advertised for sale. Surely a democratic and anti-German public opinion so vigorously manifested in such circumstances would deserve a more sympathetic, and more accurate, analysis.

M. POLANYI

[Our difference with Professor Polanyi about the Hungarian Opposition is one of emphasis rather than substance. We did not suggest that it was in any way responsible for the Horthy regime. On the contrary, we welcomed the union of Opposition forces, at the same time pointing out the skill shown by Hungarian reaction in using and perverting the Opposition. We asked the Opposition to face certain test questions; an intelligent interest in the Beveridge Report is no substitute for an answer. About Rassay opinions differ. He is undoubtedly a man of courage who has on occasion stood up to reaction and whose narrow escape from assassination we ourselves mentioned. Time alone can show whether our estimate of his political attitude is correct; we should be delighted if Professor Polanyi proved to be right.—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

## THE CASE OF THE HOMOSEXUAL

SIR,—For a great number of years we both enjoyed collaborating with Dr. Stekel, who has been quoted by Mr. R. D. Reid as one of the greatest authorities on the psychology of homosexuality. We were therefore much surprised to learn that Dr. Stekel, who for 20 years at least firmly advocated the acquired causation of homosexuality and the possibility of its treatment and cure, should have stated just the contrary, according to Mr. Reid. We can testify, both from our own and the much larger experience of the late Dr. Stekel, that those cases who desired treatment and who stuck to it until the end benefited very much by psycho-analysis. Most of them were able to marry and to live a life of average happiness. We admit, however, that only a small percentage of such persons wish to have treatment, and also that their treatment requires much effort and experience on the part of the psycho-therapist.

28, Carlton Hill, N.W.8. HILDA STEKEL
6, Broom Avenue, Manchester. DR. S. LOWY

## RELIGION IN STATE SCHOOLS

SIR,—The letter you publish from Dr. Marie Stopes should be a valuable stimulant to Catholic parents. There are moments when some of us are tempted by weariness to question whether our struggle for educational justice is really necessary, whether the times are not grown so tolerant that we might risk committing our children to the environment of a State school without danger to their religion. Then we find something as wildly silly as Dr. Stopes's letter and realise that the days of Titus Oates and Lord George Gordon are still very near.

What did Dr. Stopes mean? Clearly what she wrote is meaningless. She says that "in certain courts recently" the number of juvenile delinquents from council schools was 21.6 per thousand and from Roman Catholic schools 45.5 per thousand. Thus, 933.9 per thousand must have been at no school at all or at private schools or at what are popularly termed public schools. Perhaps she meant per hundred; even so it is a calculation I find hard to follow. In what district are 33.9 of the juvenile delinquents drawn from private schools? And, she tells us, "the same is recorded" with adult prisoners.

What was in the poor lady's mind? Had someone told her that in predominantly Catholic districts delinquents were predominantly Catholic, and did she simply invent some figures to give herself an air of sociological solemnity?

The truth, I think, is quite simple. There are still plenty of people about for whom the word "Catholic" acts as a drug stupifying all mental processes, and as long as these people are about we shall take good care to preserve our children from being taught either arithmetic or morals by them.

EVELYN WAUGH

SIR,—The real cause of the proportionately high figures of juvenile delinquents from Catholic schools is far less intriguing than Dr. Stopes suggests. Catholics are a comparatively poor community and their schools are mainly to be found in congested and slum-ridden industrial districts. That even the Word of God cannot make rapid headway against deplorable social conditions is a truth which the NEW STATESMAN at least will appreciate.

MICHAEL DE LA BEDOYERE
Catholic Herald.

## CHRISTIANITY AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SIR,—The author of your London Diary is "astounded" at a recent pronouncement by the headmasters of certain well-known public schools. Certainly, it cannot be claimed that the tone of the public schools is fully and consciously Christian. Criticism is salutary if there should be any complacency on this point, though critics may sometimes forget that schools have to deal with the nature of young people as it is, and that they function in an environment both semi-pagan and full of confusion, of which young people feel the effect. But the headmasters do not make any such claim.

For what is the specific differentia of a Christian foundation? A school has a Christian basis if it bears constant corporate witness to the fact and the claims of God, if the Christian doctrine of God and man is systematically taught throughout, and if the Christian life and character are presented as the ideal to aim at. In such a school Christianity is not an "extra," but foundational.

Bramston's, J. D'E. FIRTH
Winchester.

## ACTOR AND CRITIC

SIR,—What is the matter with Mr. J. B. Priestley? He goes out of his way to write, "It is significant that in the *Britain in Pictures* series, which has had some official backing, the volume on *British Dramatists* ended with a hopelessly wilful and distorted sketch of our contemporary drama." Now, sir, the *Britain in Pictures* series has had no official backing. It was, and remains, a wholly private enterprise, and the legend that it was officially backed has already been exposed as false in your columns. As Editor of the series I was responsible for the choice of Mr. Graham Greene as author of the volume *British Dramatists*, and I consider that Mr. Greene in the space at his disposal


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JONATHAN CAPE

paid a generous and just tribute to contemporary dramatists (including Mr. Priestley himself) with the possible exception of Mr. Bernard Shaw—" whose tough surface," he declares, however, " it would be idle to attempt to scratch " in the space at his command.

The trouble with Mr. Priestley is that nothing but undiluted praise for his work, good or bad, contents him. It is a natural weakness, but a weakness it is hard to feel indulgent towards in an author who persistently insinuates that he ought to be praised because of his noble aims. Let Mr. Priestley rest on his own not inconsiderable abilities and be prepared for others to admire them less than he does himself. It is a fate that he should be proud to share with far greater dramatists, and his servile whining as an ill-used public benefactor of mankind in the arts is both pompous and pretentious.

W. J. TURNER

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SIR,—Mr. Priestley's rather slighting reference to the unfortunate provincial newspaper critic, in your issue of September 25th, hardly takes into account the odds with which the latter has so often to contend. I speak from experience, having been one who had to combine dramatic criticism with other duties.

No doubt he is largely correct in his views, but he appears to throw the blame on the critic, who may be hampered by circumstances quite outside his control. For instance, theatre managers in the provinces are apt to resent serious criticism and bring pressure, through the advertising managers of the newspapers, to stop it, in case any honest attempt should adversely affect the box office for that week. These gentlemen seldom realise that the public distrusts fulsome write-ups, or rather ignores them completely. Apart from this, it is not always easy to convince editors, chief sub-editors, news editors and similar moguls that the play as such has any news value (news stories about players, if sufficiently spicy, come into another category), and from their point of view they may be right. To try to get home to them that a newspaper, particularly in a town with only one or two playhouses, has a cultural duty in such matters means ploughing a long and stony furrow.

Those repertory companies which endeavour to put on serious drama in provincial towns, and even to experiment, usually work on a very slender margin, and are consequently fearful of really impartial criticism, although, to do them justice, they will usually agree in private. But they take refuge in the plea : " This is not London, and we cannot afford a London standard of criticism."

In spite of these handicaps, a great many provincial critics who honestly care for the theatre try to maintain some sort of standard, and will go out of their way to help the repertory companies by circumventing the cynical " subs," and giving publicity under the guise of " news " to their efforts.

No theatre manager, producer or actor enjoys even the gently adverse " crit." although it may be constructively helpful, and a provincial critic is more easily smothered than his brother of the nationals.

It is not lack of good intent or interest, Mr. Priestley, on the part of the critic himself. I think you have been unwittingly unjust to that editorial outcast.

GERALD NETHERCOT

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SIR,—As one who served a long penal servitude in so-called " popular " film and dramatic criticism, may I elaborate one or two points which Michael Redgrave raised in his recent article ?

He is right, obviously, in complaining of the way the mass-produced papers treat the theatre. He is not right, I suggest, in putting most of the blame on the critics themselves. In popular journalism films are everything, the theatre is a filler. In a daily a review has to compete for its space against police court reports, murder, stolen jewels, bishops, and all the other unflagging sources of entertainment. This means, in practice, that the news desk dominates the theatre ; reviews must have a smart " angle," must produce a snappy headline, must be diverting in themselves. This may be, and is, deplorable, but it is not the fault of the critics, many of whom are first-class men—Baughan, Borthwick and Parsons of men who have died in recent years, for instance. There are similar men to-day. Pat Mannock was too modest to name them in his letter.

In Sunday papers the theatre is usually a small piece tacked on at the end of the film spread. This means that in practice most Sunday " critics " are really film men, covering the stage when they are mentally fagged at the end of days spent wallowing in movies. The man who is bound to give 80 per cent. of his space to films, and 20 per cent. to the theatre, must inevitably regard the stage as secondary. He can't help it.

Redgrave's theory that criticism would be improved if critics had periodic correspondence courses in the works of Montague and Lewes is delightful—and blissfully wrong. The first sign of any such influence in their copy, and they would be fired on the spot !

Are the editors, then, and not the critics, to blame ? That depends on the view. If you hold that a million-circulation paper has some responsibility to improve its readers, then you condemn the system which panders to 20,000,000 filmgoers and more or less ignores the relative few who love the theatre. If you take the view that the public gets what it deserves, you must agree that the theatre is just about correctly treated.

CONNERY CHAPPELL

## WATER

SIR,—There are two aspects of this water supply business which seem relevant. The first concerns an episode before the war when I walked over Helvellen and came down on the main Keswick-Grasmere road by Thirlmere aiming for an inn which was marked on my map. There I found that the house was no longer an inn, and moreover the occupiers refused even to make me a cup of tea on the grounds that since the Manchester Corporation had taken over the lake for a water supply they had put an absolute veto on any catering in its neighbourhood. This may or may not have been true, but it indicates what can happen when lakes are taken over. The other affair concerns the wartime water rates. Mine in London have crept up to 8¼ per cent. on the annual value during the war and this despite the fact that at no time has the house been fully occupied and the amount of water used must have been considerably less than before the war. There is apparently no way in which the ordinary householder can make any appeal about this and no public way of seeking to have this rise in the cost of living in any way controlled.

ALAN MONCRIEFF

## THE HOURS OF LABOUR

SIR,—Official statements on the nation's health may be comforting as far as freedom from epidemics go but no practising doctor is under any illusions about the general health reserves of our people. Excessive working hours are still being encouraged, in spite of the fact that a very thorough statistical survey has shown that maximum production tends to fall when the 48-hour week is exceeded. Conditions of work leave much more to be desired than was intended by the 1937 Factory Act, whilst the increasing attitude of *laissez-faire* amongst some employers is perhaps the worst feature of all. Harassed as they may be by Government orders these employers must realise their great moral obligation in safeguarding the health and energy of those who are paying so willingly and yet so dearly for the badge of patriotism.

Employers, alone, are not to blame for the excessive hours put in by their workpeople. Many of the latter, feeling below par, would be only too willing to work fewer hours but, unfortunately, find themselves caught in the vicious circle of the present income tax collection system. This amounts to the moral enslavement of thousands who were only too willing to rise to the occasion when their country most needed them.

It is hard to reconcile the sanctity of human life with the insanity of war, but we can and must remember that it is on human, and not material, considerations that the future of our race depends.

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# BOOKS IN GENERAL

It is a great many years now since the explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson began his attack on the popular notion that the Arctic was a region frozen, desolate and utterly hostile to civilised man. To the Eskimo, indeed, or the inhabitants of Greenland and Iceland the unfrozen south was the fatal region; for while the southerner's bodily health improves as he goes north, the man from the germless north finds it hard to survive in our southerly countries. But this was only an aside in Stefansson's defence of the Arctic. He delighted in writing geographical detective stories in which Popular Misconception or "the old cosmogony" was the villain, showing, for example, that the coldest months in Southern Iceland were no worse than the winters of Milan or Pennsylvania. The idea of the Frozen North was always Stefansson's enemy, and I have an early book of his, *The Northward Course of Empire*, which contains a chart showing that civilisation is gradually getting cooler. There is a faint Nordic whiff about this chart, for it is entitled The Path of Supremacy, and is based on "the mean temperatures of world leadership." From this we can see the graph of civilisation, undulating but unmistakably rising from the heat of lower Egypt to Athens, Rome, Paris, London and New York. Chicago, Toronto and Moscow lie immediately ahead of man and farther on, much farther on, lies what is presumably the peak of human achievement—Winnipeg. Its mean annual temperature is freezing point!

I hesitate to mention the mean annual temperature of Winnipeg, for temperatures often lead to trouble. Lecturing in Montana once, Stefansson found the audience restive when he compared their winter low of minus 60° with the Arctic. They thought "people outside the State might get the wrong idea about it." But by now Stefansson's conception of a "friendly" Arctic is established in our minds, and has had its influence on the younger expeditions that used to go north in the decade before the war. The friendly Arctic has now given way to a new notion: the inevitable Arctic, the Arctic of the aviator. I hoped to find more about this in Stefansson's new book on Greenland,* but there is only one short chapter. It briefly states, what we all know, that America has taken over Greenland from the Danes, "as long as the security of America is threatened," and that Greenland, as the vigil of Courtauld reminded us, is the home of our weather, the most important meteorological observation post for aviation in the northern hemisphere. In that closed, empty country whose 17,000 Eskimo inhabitants have lived in jealously watched and advanced social conditions, the Germans, too, may have their observers. There is no hiding place, no camouflage like snow.

It is difficult to feel an affection for Greenland, though its British explorers, Frobisher, Davis, Hudson and Baffin stir patriotic associations. Queen Elizabeth, after Frobisher's landing there, gave the name of West England to this desolate land, but the discovery that Frobisher's gold ore was really nothing but iron pyrites damped our interest. It is hard not to feel that Davis was right when he wrote in 1585: "the lothsome view of the shore and irksome noyse of the yce was such that it bred strange conceites among us, so that we supposed the place to be wast, and voyd of any sensible or vegetable creatures, whereupon I called the same Desolation." There are two valuable things in the land, if we leave out a first taste of Europe's bad weather: marble and cryolite, an important ingredient of aluminium. Stefansson is not the man to accept the worst about the north without a struggle. He points out that the latest science reduces the size of the ice-cap to 82 per cent. of the total area, and that in the summer the snow-free land is larger than the British Isles. He has special delight in showing that the greatest snow-free area is not in the south, where we would expect it, but in the north and north-east, far within the Arctic Circle, where flowers will bloom and the bee hums. But he has to say that Greenland is the one place which does to some extent justify the old popular picture of the Arctic and the pessimism of the Greek geographers. His accounts of the voyages and the settlements, and his investigation of the mystery of the disappearance of the large European colony from Greenland in the Middle Ages, are argued in the best manner of scientific detection which I find very enjoyable.

In the end there is something too dour, earnest and stark about all our Arctic literature. Though we read that the North puts an hypnotic spell upon its adventurers, touching them with its fragile visions and its frenzies, the spell is rarely conveyed to the reader. The Arctic is a region where there can be torpor but not leisure, and it is commonly described to us in a spirit altogether too athletic. No one who can write, it seems, has ever been there. At once the exception comes to my mind. It is Lord Dufferin's *Letters from High Latitudes*.† That gay, spirited and eloquent peer, a fine example of the audacious and nonchalant amateur, has given the Arctic one of its rare touches of human light-heartedness and poetry. We do not read far into his letters before we detect his master. It was Kinglake. We are charmed by the dash—it is almost chivalry—of a writer who thinks nothing of attempting to do for Iceland and Jan Mayen (that needle of rock rising 7,000 feet from the fog-bound sea off the eastern coast of Greenland) what the epicurean Kinglake did for the luxurious and picaresque sights of the Turkish Empire. Lord Dufferin was not an explorer. He sailed into the Arctic as a gentleman—once when he appeared at the helm dressed in nothing but a fur coat and a pair of fur boots, the coat was almost blown off his back, and he compared himself to Puss in Boots. He added little or nothing to geographical knowledge. Jan Mayen and Spitsbergen were his limits, which were pretty good in a small schooner in the Fifties; but he was curious of excitement and danger, and if one excepts the bald narratives of the early navigators which have their own plain human awe of their task, there is no other writer who brings the fantasies of the Arctic and the zest of voyaging so vividlly and so joyously to the page. Like Kinglake, he had the ironical but romantic eye. He admired style in man or nature. But how different was the basic feeling of his scene from Kinglake's. Kinglake enjoyed the piquant sight of pomp turned sly and corrupt and of semi-barbarous romance; the other was in the stern, raving world of Odin:

> There is something, moreover, particularly mystical in the effect of the grey, dreamy atmosphere of an Arctic night through whose uncertain medium mountain and headland loom as impalpable as the frontiers of a demon world . . . Amid the rugged features of such a country the refinements of Paganism would have been dwarfed into insignificance. How out of place would seem a Jove with his beard in ringlets—a trim Apollo—a sleek Bacchus—an ambrosial Venus—a slim Diana—and all their attendant groups of Oreads and Cupids—amid the ocean mists and ice-bound torrents, the flame-scarred mountains and four months night, of a land which the opposing forces of heat and cold have selected for a battlefield.

And again:

> Nectar, Sensuality and Inextinguishable Laughter were elements of felicity too mean for the nobler atmosphere of their Walhalla; and to those active temperaments and healthy minds, invigorated and solemnised by the massive mould of the scenery around them—Strength, Courage and Endurance, and above all Self-Sacrifice—naturally seemed more essential attributes of divinity than mere elegance and beauty.

Human beings can be divided into natural southerners or natural northerners. I am the former and I do not quote this passage for its prose or its sense, for Lord Dufferin is obviously carried away, like so many of the Victorians, by the growing cult of the north and by the naive but sinister Teutonic notion that energetic unreason was excusable, indeed admirable if cultivated by practical men. But those words do show that Lord Dufferin's quick imagination was moved, and that is everything in a traveller.

*Letters from High Latitudes*, like many conversational books, looks more quotable than it really is. I will risk a passage or two. Lord Dufferin puts everything down, even his dreams. These were as spectacular as the Arctic. There was one of "a great funeral among barren mountains, where white bears in peers' robes were the pall bearers, and a sea dragon the chief mourner." His schooner, the *Foam*, was towed on part of her journey by a French corvette called the *Reine Hortense*, with a Prince in command. Always quick to think out a new fête, he appeared disguised as Le Père Arctique when they crossed the Arctic Line. This kind of gaiety is usually painful to read in books of travel—one hears the clumping boots of Folly and none of the wit—but Lord Dufferin sweeps everything before him. Even the Icelandic ladies. His sociability is his charm; but quietly he will drop that concern and confront us with the lonely realities of the voyage. The *Foam* had to part company with the festive corvette which was running out of coal, and was left, in the midst of a fantastic fleet of field ice, to get to Jan Mayen alone. The hawser dropped; the *Foam* leapt free. One can see the change of mood. In a few minutes the corvette has disappeared into the fog. The schooner is alone. They set the ship's course and soon they were skimming along and

> this state of prosperity continued for the next 24 hours . . . But before three o'clock on the second day specks of ice began to flicker here and there on the horizon, then larger bulks came floating by in forms as picturesque as ever. (One, I remember, a human hand thrust up out of the water with outstretched forefinger as if to warn us against proceeding further) until at last the whole sea became clouded with hummocks that seemed to gather on our path with magical multiplicity. Up to this time we had seen nothing of the island yet I knew we must be within a few miles of it; and now, to make things quite pleasant there descended upon us a thicker fog than I should have thought the air capable of sustaining; it seemed to hang in solid festoons from the masts and the spars.

When it cleared for a moment they suddenly saw the desired island, the terrifying snow cone of Mayen, thousands of feet above their heads as if suspended in the sky.

Lord Dufferin's attempts to find an anchorage at Mayen led to a dangerous adventure. The *Foam* narrowly escaped being shut in by the ice. They had to make a dash out of it, down the narrowing gaps against the wind, but this did not chill his spirits. "I have never seen anything so beautiful as her behaviour," he writes of the *Foam*, "Had she been a living creature she could not have dodged and wound and doubled with more conscious cunning and dexterity; and it was quite amusing to hear the endearing way the people spoke to her, each time the nimble creature contrived to elude some more than usually threatening tongue of ice. . . ."

No one who has read it will forget Lord Dufferin's description of the great glaciers that fork down like a sculptured river from the heights of Mayen. Nor does one forget the extraordinary quickness of his response to people and the ever-changing Arctic scene where sun and fog transform every minute. One moment there is the flashing of mirrors and the next, the black blankness of dead fog, unrevealing and prickling with terror. Lord Dufferin's Arctic is friendlier than the exact, measured athletic solitude of the explorers; it has been, for a few weeks, civilised.

V. S. PRITCHETT

*Greenland.* By VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON. *Harrap.* 12s. 6d.

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## NATURE AND THE DESTINY OF MAN

**Human Destiny.** By REINHOLD NIEBUHR, D.D. *Nisbet.* 15*s.*

In a revolutionary period the progressive forces must attack established religion, because it is the organising symbol of conservative motives. But the attack can be successful only under religious leadership. To attack religion as such is to ensure the survival of reactionary religious organisations. What is required is a revolution in religion. This is one of the lessons of history, and it is vividly underlined by the triumph of the Orthodox Church in Soviet Russia, substantially unaltered in its religious outlook.

Happily there is a growing recognition of the need for religious leadership, and there are signs of an effort, within the Churches, to provide it. Before they can be successful there are religious conditions to be fulfilled. Among the first of these are a critique of the religious tradition, and a restatement of Christian doctrine in relation to the problems of society. Dr. Niebuhr has set himself this task in the second volume of his Gifford Lectures, and has taken us a long step forward in the right direction. *Human Destiny* is a difficult book, chiefly because it requires familiarity with the theological tradition. But it is a landmark in the development of the present revolution. This was to be expected from a man who is a radical socialist as well as a leading theologian.

Niebuhr finds the key to the conflict between Christian and secular social theory in the difference between the Greek and the Hebrew elements of our cultural heritage. This is a crucial insight. The Greek traces human failure to the limitations of the mind; the Jew finds its source in the rebellion of the will. The Greek sees ignorance which needs illumination, where the Hebrew sees sin which requires redemption. The secular tradition in a period of the expansion of knowledge is apt to believe that the millenium is on the doorstep, because it fails to realise the need for transforming the human will. It can believe that Man can save himself. But the Christian tradition, based on the Hebrew insight, goes deeper. If the will is sick, then Man cannot cure himself. The answer to sin is grace. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

From this vindication of the Hebraic standpoint, Niebuhr turns to a critique of the Christian tradition. He presents it as a succession of phases in which there is a kind of dialectical opposition between the doctrine of sin and the doctrine of grace; between the pessimism of the first and the optimism of the second. The true Christian attitude to the problem of historic society demands a synthesis of these two doctrines. Such a synthesis enables the Christian to see in every historical situation unlimited possibilities of progress, and demands his participation in the struggle to achieve them. But his optimism is qualified by his recognition that sin is not thereby overcome, and that every advance opens out new possibilities of evil. The struggle is unending. The Kingdom of Heaven cannot come within the limits of history. Human progress is asymptotic to a perfection which can never be attained "in Time."

Is this a standing-ground from which Christianity can challenge Communism for the leadership of social progress in our day? Probably not; because however much it may appeal to our *minds*, it fails to touch the *will* in the way that Communism undoubtedly does. For this paradox there is an explanation. Though the *substance* of Niebuhr's doctrine is a vindication of the Hebraic tradition, the *form* of it is characteristically Greek. This form dictates the questions which are posed, the selection of material for answering them and the form of the answer. It is an aesthetic, not a religious form; and its final standard of judgment is an ideal perfection which the world of practical reality can strive towards, but never reach. Whatever its content, the form of Niebuhr's conclusion is pure Platonism; and the form of his whole theology, like that of previous theologies, is the reflection of the secular philosophy of its time. Communism, on the other hand, though its substance is drawn from secular, "Hellenic" thought, has rediscovered and appropriated the Hebraic form. It is this, indeed, that gives meaning to Hitler's identification of Communism with "Jewish materialism". The essence of the Hellenic tradition is that it puts the life of contemplation—the "spiritual" life—above the practical, and so makes practical values subordinate to theoretical. For the Hebrews action is primary, and thought is at once a part of action and a means to action. The Marxist doctrine of the unity of theory and practice is the modern reassertion of this, and it is the truly revolutionary element in Communist theory.

This failure to realise the *formal* significance of Hebrew thought makes Niebuhr's critique of the Christian tradition a theoretical critique—a critique of theology. It treats the failure of the Church as due primarily to errors in doctrine, to be removed by a fuller illumination. The Jewish prophets are constantly concerned with the critique of religious history, but the formula of their criticism is, "We have sinned." It is a criticism of action, addressed to the will, and demanding repentance. It is this sort of critique which must precede any revival of religious leadership, a Christian criticism of Christian practice, of the social policies of historic Christianity; a criticism which ignores nothing and condones nothing; a self-criticism, in the face of the world, which finds no room for self-defence. For the meaning of religious doctrine can be read only in the action it inspires; and the salvation of the Church, as of the world, waits on its repentance.

JOHN MACMURRAY

## FLUX

**A Private Country.** By LAWRENCE DURRELL. *Faber.* 6*s.*

**Under the Cliff.** By GEOFFREY GRIGSON. *Routledge.* 5*s.*

**The Orchestral Mountain.** By J. F. HENDRY. *Routledge.* 5*s.*

**Out of Seir.** By E. M. ALMEDINGEN. *John Lane.* 3*s.* 6*d.*

**Cities of the Plain.** By ALEX. COMFORT. *Grey Walls Press.* 4*s.* 6*d.*

Contemporary poetry is an activity into which an extraordinary amount of intelligence and energy flows. Poetically, a great deal of this energy may seem wasted. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to regard the poetry being written to-day as the freest and most energetic expression of the spiritual development of the most intelligent younger writers of our time. If it is often incoherent, that is just because to so many of these writers poetry is simply a means of expressing their spiritual aspirations. Of the books I am reviewing, J. F. Hendry's and Miss Almedingen's seem to me of this order. Miss Almedingen, who has written a remarkably controlled novel *Frossia*, dealing with a huge theme, uses poetry as a means of expressing metaphysical strivings. She does not get any further than this. That is to say, she does not arrive at any form, any subject beyond the vague flux of her emotions, but one must respect the impulse which drives her to poetry. J. F. Hendry's poems, although more skilful and more interesting than Miss Almedingen's, are also drowned in an incompletely expressed yearning for the poetic. Few clear outlines appear above the torrent of his images:

> Sing your song of tears alone o blackbird
> On the bough, for I must mourn in a Chinese white.
> The blossoming cherry, lilac and white lightning
> Dawn blow cool and bless with colour scarred
> Furrows of sorrow's thunder in my head. . . .

The reader embarks on a sea of language, and hopes that he is going to land somewhere. But he doesn't, with Mr. Hendry, land anywhere; or at any rate, not often.

With Mr. Durrell one definitely does get somewhere, although not always. But Mr. Durrell, like Mr. Grigson, establishes an imaginative territory which has recognisable outlines. This world is one that has long haunted the English imagination. It is Greece. Mr. Durrell's poems about Greece would read refreshingly well in an anthology, beside Byron and Landor. They have a beautiful limpidity which invokes atmosphere, light, colour, outline, and in the background one is conscious always of an overwhelming and tragic fate:

> A song in the valley of Nemea:
> Sing quiet, quiet quiet here.
>
> Song for the brides of Argos
> Combing the swarms of golden hair:
> Quiet quiet, quiet there.
>
> Under the rolling comb of grass,
> The sword outrusts the golden helm.

These poems have at their best the depth and warmth of a real sensuousness. They are something new in English poetry, because they are neither puritanical nor anti-puritanical. They remind me at moments of the short impressionist poems Lorca wrote when he was young.

When Mr. Durrell leaves Greece we are back in the world of formless ideas. His satirical poems are turgid and obscure. If he can rid himself entirely of turgidness, he may become a poet of great power. As it is, his achievement is very real, and he has already written memorable poems of a beauty which is being destroyed all over the world, but in which sanity seems to lie.

Mr. Geoffrey Grigson has a very clearly defined, luminous world of his own, the world of eighteenth-century English water colourists. His poetry is very limited. The technique, skilfully handled, is that of the strip, rather than of the song. Strips of words conveying sharp visual impressions are pasted, as it were, neatly on to the page, phrase dovetailed into phrase:

> O, and then you: in that same
> Theatre, now grown less huge,
> We watched the fat, short Tenor
> Push down, as Samson, the three-ply
> Pillar.

It is the technique of Mehitobel the cat and Archie the cockroach butting out messages on the office typewriter, but it manages to get across a very clear picture. These poems are a pleasure to read. The emotion they convey is one of antiquarian piety, a gentle mild gilded sensation, occasionally interrupted by pin-pricks of sharp unpleasantness. There is piety, too, in the translations from German poets and in the poems on Hampstead.

Alex Comfort's play is an expressionist poetic dramatisation of a conflict between miners, their employers and trades unionists. The dice are loaded to the point of incredibility, against the weak miners by the wicked bosses. Such a subject is a temptation to a writer of such extraordinary squeamishness as Mr. Comfort. On the stage it would, if successfully performed, surely be unbearably painful. At the same time the dialogue often shows great power. It is both poetic and realistic. A speech by one character, the doctor, out-Audens Auden in the use of clinical imagery. Alex Comfort is a writer of real seriousness, with great technical gifts, and sensibility. Unfortunately, he seems to be overcome at the present time by the sense of the horror of life. His writing often produces the same kind of effect as photographs of atrocities. Ultimately, atrocities are a distraction from art to the reader's sensibility; so that Alex Comfort's horrified obsession with uncontrollable events has the same effect on the reader as extreme subjectivism.

STEPHEN SPENDER

## A NEW STANDARD WORK

**The French Revolution.** By J. M. THOMPSON. *Basil Blackwell.* 32*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. Thompson has not only written the best volume on the French Revolution that an English historian has ever written; he has also written a book that does honour to the scholarship of this country. Every page shows clearly his deep grasp of the issues to be faced, his profound knowledge of the massive materials it is necessary to know, his careful reflection upon the men and events he has to describe, his graphic power of conveying the interplay of men and events. It is not necessary to accept his interpretation of

the French Revolution to say with emphasis that no English scholar has made a contribution of equal value to this great subject. He is always interesting, always honest, and always straightforward. His book is the expression of Oxford liberalism at its best in the historical field. Not since Acton's famous lectures at Cambridge nearly fifty years ago has there been so exciting or so moving a discussion of this theme.

The point of view from which Mr. Thompson writes is, as I have said, that of an Oxford liberal. The unstated assumption which underlies its whole treatment is that men as political animals are apt to discuss their differences and resolve them by persuasion; that once they move from consent to coercion their degradation is inevitable. Within the limits set by that assumption, Mr. Thompson is almost always fair and not seldom magnanimous. His Louis XVI, his Mirabeau, his Danton, his Carnot, his Robespierre, his Saint-Just, are living beings whom one feels one knows with genuine intimacy. He is, I think, if anything, over-generous to Marie Antoinette and under-generous to Mme Roland. He agrees that the Girondins were anxious for war in order to put a stop to the social development of the Revolution, and that Robespierre and the Jacobins were driven to the centralisation they imposed by the necessities of a war for which they had no responsibility. He sees that, broadly speaking, the Girondins were the party of big business, and that the main Jacobin sympathies were with the little man. He does not pretend that the Revolution was more than the liberation of the middle-class from the bondage of royal despotism and a feudal system which gave special privileges to the nobility and the Church without asking them for the performance of any proportionate function in return. He agrees that the monarchy destroyed itself; and, if he is severe on Robespierre, he does not attempt to paint either Mirabeau or Danton in colours brighter than they deserve. He does, indeed, make one feel that the two latter men had a full zest for life which is wholly absent from the frustrated hard ascetism of Robespierre; and one suspects that hard as Mr. Thompson has striven to do justice to the most famous of the Jacobins, it is only with some difficulty that he has brought himself to do justice to his virtues. The whole history is written with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy, and it is sometimes difficult not to feel that, as he has composed his epic, Mr. Thompson has had at the back of his mind the events of 1940 hardly less than those from 1789 to Thermidor.

Granted the underlying premiss upon which he builds his narrative, it is difficult to quarrel with the great picture he has painted. But it is precisely the underlying premiss that it is most difficult to accept. The royalists, the Girondins, the leading statesmen of the foreign powers, were never really willing to think in terms of a reason which they separated from the privileges each represented. Even Robespierre is not a person whom one is tempted to like, he thought in wider terms of the well-being of Frenchmen than most of his rivals. He saw, much earlier, that the Revolution was bound to go much further than any of his critics were willing to recognise. He was more prepared to see that there was a case for social and economic changes than any of the Girondins. It is, no doubt, true that his general approach to all his problems were grimly moralistic, and that he assumed that those who differed from him were guilty of moral delinquency, and that he lacked the strategic adaptability of men like Carnot in his own time, or of Lenin in our own. But the line he took was not merely, I think, as Mr. Thompson makes it, the outcome of his personal view: it was forced upon him by enemies of the Revolution. The Terror he and his colleagues imposed was loathsome to his contemporaries and resulted in the emergence of the Napoleonic dictatorship; but it is also true, I think, to say that the character given by Robespierre to the Revolution made its influence on the nineteenth century one which opened up new possibilities to the human spirit which, had he not emerged as leader in the fateful year 1793-4, would have been on a very much lower plane.

The one thing that, for me, is missing in Mr. Thompson's book is the discussion of whether a change of the magnitude which 1789 implies could, in fact, have been exerted by persuasion. Admit, as I fully admit, that the transition to coercion means conflict and even death, I do not know how Mr. Thompson can have hoped that the process of persuasion was possible in the circumstances. The attitudes of men were too hostile to permit co-operation; and the alternative to co-operation is the conflict that occurred. In these circumstances, one has to choose between the Girondin and the Jacobin; and it seems to me obvious that the principles of the Revolution were saved by the Jacobins. I wish, too, Mr. Thompson had said some more about the Enragés and their outlook. The brevity of his references to men like Roux and Varlet is the one great defect in a work which is one of the outstanding historical works of our time.

HAROLD J. LASKI

## GERMAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

**Some Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin.** Translated by FREDERIC PROKOSCH. *New Directions: Norfolk, Connecticut.*

**Poems of Hölderlin.** Translated with an Introduction by MICHAEL HAMBURGER. *Nicholson and Watson.* 6s.

**Rainer Maria Rilke: Poems.** Translated by JESSIE LAMONT. *Columbia University Press.* $3.00.

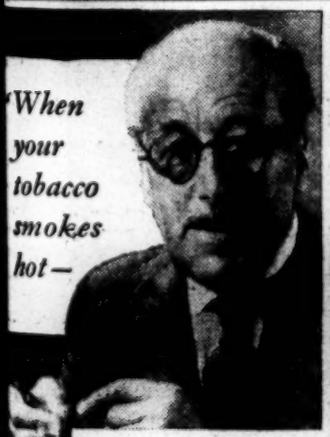
**Rainer Maria Rilke, Selected Poems.** Translated by RUTH SPEIRS. *Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, Cairo.*

**Heine in England.** By S. L. WORMLEY. *Oxford.* 24s.

Hölderlin may well claim to be the most inspired of all German poets. Neglected in his own country for half a century, he was revived by Stefan George and his circle. Now, a hundred years after his death, he is beginning to receive attention in England and America. Mr. Prokosch is an accomplished poet who is well qualified to undertake the difficult task of translating some poems of Hölderlin. He bravely prints the German text opposite his versions and he satisfies the strictest standards of exactness and fidelity. If sometimes his English Alcaics are a little free, he is perhaps not to be blamed. Indeed, we have only two complaints to make, one that he leaves *Patmos* unfinished, and the other that his book is too short. How good he is can be seen from his version of *Hälfte des Lebens*:

> Laden with yellowing pears
> And with wild roses filled
> Lies the land in the sea:
> Beautiful swans,
> Drunk with your kisses, you
> Dip your heads in the
> Saintly sobering water.

Mr. Hamburger makes no claims to poetical accomplishment of this kind and his book is intended as a useful introduction to Hölderlin. This it undeniably is. In an excellent introduction Mr. Hamburger gives the main facts of Hölderlin's tragic life and illustrates freely from the original sources. Then he prints a large and well selected number of poems in German with a careful translation opposite. His translation is in the best sense of the word a "crib." Careful and readable, it tells us what the original means and does not attempt to turn it into metre. This book will be extremely useful for those, and there must be many of them, who find Hölderlin's language difficult and will be grateful for an excellent "Loeb" of this kind.

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Rilke continues to excite the devotion of English and American writers, and is once again fortunate in his interpreters. Miss Lamont is not only a scholar but a poet. She translates a large number of Rilke's shorter poems from his earliest to his latest and succeeds again and again in conveying their spirit as well as their sense. How good she is can be seen from the opening stanza of such a masterpiece as *The Panther*:

> His weary glance, from passing by the bars,
> Has grown into a dazed and vacant stare;
> It seems to him there a thousand bars
> And out beyond those bars the empty air;

or this from the *Last Poems*:

> High up on the hills of the heart, see how small there,
> See: beyond the last domain of words, and higher,
> But how small also, is the last distant
> Summit of feeling. Do you perceive it?
> High up on the hills of the heart.

That is the real cadence of Rilke, and he is fortunate to have found an interpreter so subtle and so accomplished as Miss Lamont. Miss Speirs is not so ambitious or so gifted as this. She is content to translate rhymed poems without rhymes, and so to deprive them of half their music, but when she turns to the *Duino Elegies*, of which she translates four, she shows how good she can be. She conveys their nervous sensitive movement, their hesitations and ambiguities, in such a way that her work reads like original poetry. How good this is:

> And he listened and quietened. So much your tender
> Rising was able to do; tall in his cloak, his Fate
> stepped behind the wardrobe, and, easily shifting,
> His restless future pressed into the folds of the curtain.

It is to be hoped that Miss Speirs will soon translate the other six Elegies.

Mr. Wormley's book is of a different kind. It is based on a thesis and shows the marks of its origin. It attempts to enumerate and describe all the English translations of Heine and then to tell of his influence on English poetry. Even as a list it is not complete; for I can find no reference to Gilbert Murray's version of *Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam*. As a work of criticism, it is too much of a catalogue to be interesting or even readable. The facts are presented soberly and in great detail, but at the end of it we are not any the wiser why Heine was so much admired by the Victorians.

C. M. BOWRA

## LESSONS OF A LOST PEACE

**World in Trance.** By LEOPOLD SCHWARZSCHILD. With a Foreword by D. W. BROGAN. *Hamish Hamilton.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

*World in Trance* covers the history of international affairs from 1918 to 1940. The book opens with a thorough discussion of Clemenceau's failure during the peace negotiations. Mr. Schwarzschild does not mince words, and when he takes sides, as he always does, there is no ambiguity about it. "When the post-war world was being moulded, the Frenchmen of 1919 strove to convince the world that in the future they would inevitably be relatively weaker than Germany, that they would be unable, all by themselves, or almost by themselves, to act once again as the breakwater of democracy against a Germany twice as large as themselves." Yet the League of Nations was conceived as an imaginary executive without any real power to check a potential aggressor.

Mr. Schwarzschild proceeds then to show how the German officers' corps reacted to the peace "settlement":

> . . . in order to prevent the new order from establishing itself, the officers' corps went into politics. It did this not only with power and arms behind it, but also as that organised group in Germany which, as a whole, possessed the greatest number of first-rate people. It attacked this new field with furious enthusiasm, and, as in everything else it had ever undertaken, it succeeded brilliantly.

The leaders of the Weimar Republic never fully grasped the implications of this subtle game of the German general staff, nor did the Allied Governments. Indeed it was, in my view, as fatal a mistake of the Allied peacemakers in 1918 to leave the German army cadres and their leaders intact, as it was the folly of Herr Ebert and his friends to co-operate with the German generals. Mr. Schwarzschild fails to draw attention to this two-fold tragic responsibility. It was the fear of the bolshevisation of Germany which made the Allied leaders entrust the German army with the maintenance of "law and order" in Germany, and forced the Weimarians to accept this alliance. I am not certain whether the Allied leaders are not more to blame than the German dupes. Future historians will have to decide this. The significance of this historic precedent is immense.

It is somewhat surprising that Mr. Schwarzschild touches only very superficially the impact of the Soviet Revolution on the trend of events during the last twenty years. He seems almost afraid of saying anything at all. This is a serious defect of his book. What Mr. Schwarzschild fails to realise is that international affairs during the inter-war period were shaped—all over the world—by revolutionary forces which one must understand if one wants to master them in future. Thus Mr. Schwarzschild gives the impression that politics is only "a ghastly game of chess" (p. 266) in which most players are idiots and fools and only the onlooker intelligent. Very few writers realise that to be a writer on politics and to be a politician or a statesman are essentially different. To be both is rare, and to be equally good as a writer and a statesman even more rare.

Since the Kapp *putsch* in 1920 the history of the Weimar Republic was that of a rearguard action against the winning forces of a revitalised German militarism. The chapters in which Mr. Schwarzschild deals with the history of the appeasement policy with regard to Nazi Germany, Japan, and Italy, make fascinating, though depressing, reading. One despairs of the world. Fate ran its course. The German *panzer* divisions crushed France. "No country, no matter how righteous, could accuse crushed France. All of them, in the course of twenty years, had contributed their share. A world, an epoch, ended with the collapse of France."

The paramount lesson of Mr. Schwarzschild's book which Professor Brogan summarises in his Foreword (which should, perhaps, have said a little more about the author) is simple and obvious. Peace without power is impossible. On the other hand nobody can sit on bayonets. For the latter fact Professor Brogan has no recipe to propose. And yet the problem before the future peacemakers is the synthesis of power and peace. Nothing else.

J. P. MAYER

## Week-end Competitions

### No. 713

**Set by Raymond Mortimer**

The usual prizes are offered for a sonnet on Autumn with four stresses in each line instead of five.

Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, October 11th.


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# RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 710

**Set by Diogenes**

Mr. Churchill's recommendation of Basic English may be thought to have excited some alarm in the Elysian Fields. Competitors are asked to compose a letter to Mr. Churchill in not more than 200 words from Sir Thomas Browne, Dr. Johnson, Carlyle or James Joyce.

**Report by Diogenes**

A high level makes it particularly difficult to select the winning entries. Most contributors plumped for Dr. Johnson, and many of their entries contained excellent things. Muriel Malvern, for instance, writes: "A small vocabulary is the concomitant of a small mind." H. R. Shaw allowed the lexicographer to give a limited approval: "It will serve for the customs sheds of life; scholars will proceed on their way." Ronald Anderson's Joyce is more opaque than *Finnegan's Wake*—"Sigaring out of traumeturgid blowcoma aflotsum cum gerentarchic. . . ." Among the other best entries are Ohe, Michael O'Beirne, John Thornton, Charles Race, Yorick, Guy Innes, Stanley J. Sharpless, H. T. S., R. Weiss, J. N. Stoddart and Peter Sheldon. I recommend a guinea each to John Carter, Pibwob, Allan M. Laing and Leslie Johnson. William Bliss sent both a letter from Dr. Johnson and an extract from his conversation. Though the latter does not qualify, it is too good not to print.

To the Right Honourable Winston Churchill, Dr. of Laws in Harvard Coll., Massachusetts.

Methinks, Most Honoured Sir, the *Quincunx* of Heaven doth indeed run low, and 'tis past time to close the five Ports of Knowledge, when the articulation of Man is to be thus regimented; boxed up within such puny compass as would scarce allow Methuselah himself one *neologism* for each year of his life. Whether *basic* be a word properly founded in our tongue, were a question for grammarians. But 'tis certain this dismal jugglery and Procrustes' bed of language doth usurp the name of *English*.

Melancholy, and as we now see prophetic, were the calculations of that noble company of Bishops, whose version of Scripture the world has justly termed *Authorised*, when our grim Ferryman first delivered unto these Parts a book (not supposititious, but imprinted by the King's servants) basely entitled *The Bible in Basic English*, we indeed are but sad and sepulchral voices, which have no potency at the Polls nor interest at Court. But with Englishmen, even in this ill-judging age, sacrifice their very *blood, toil, sweat, and tears* to make an Ogden's travestie? or your own perorations, Honoured Sir, rest as contept with six foot as the *Moles* of Adrianus?—Thos. Browne.

(JOHN CARTER)

HONOURED SIR,—That the Divine Creator gave speech to our first parents is nowhere scripturally communicated, but is determined when Adam intituled all living creatures; and but for the edification of Babel doubtless mankind had still maintained the oratory of Eden.

I am not in this of the opinion which forbids man to join together what God hath put asunder. That good understanding which promotes commerce, learning, cordiality, peace and prayer is nurtured on signification whose essence is lexicographically abstracted, and since the English tongue to-day hath in part commuted the besetment of Latinity, to extend and ordain reality is but to legitimate prescription.

Language, however, subsists in more than semantick conjecture dredging in the plains and flats of expedience. Her ears are ever attuned to the pipes of Arcadian Pan, and the stringed exorcisms of Apollo will conjure her to breathe Heliconian symphonies.

To pare the English tongue to this exiguous substratum and adhibit the scantling to universal eloquence outmarches the immanity of Procrustes his bed; it is to flay Trojan Helen of her flesh and acclaim her nicked skeleton as the pattern of a living soul.

Your ever faithful Servant,
THOMAS BROWNE (PIBWOB)

SIR,—You are Britain's Prime Minister: you are therefore entitled to my respect. You are an orator, and may in that field count on the seasonable plaudits of the immortals. But no title to fame which you may possess can hold you excused from this nonsensical, nay, wicked policy of countenancing the evisceration of the King's English. It is a plan, Sir, which I, as a lexicographer, must unreservedly condemn. You would destroy my Dictionary and fob me off with a pamphlet. You would have me stand by, not merely quiescent, but approving, while reformist vandals, in the name of international politics, reduce the splendid vocabulary of the English language to the dimensions of a Cherokee pow-wow. Sir, it will not do!

I am aware of the arguments in support of the scheme: they are worthy of it. The foreigner who wishes to communicate with you and me, Sir, may, if English be too hard for him, put forth his plea in Latin; and if this overstep the bounds of his knowledge, why then, Sir, he may hold his tongue. We shall hardly be the losers by lacking the conversation of him who is too lazy or ignorant to speak one or the other.

I am, Sir, your Obedient Servant,
SAM JOHNSON
(ALLAN M. LAING)

SIR,—You will doughtless recoil how I have always tried to supply to my heeders all the lacks I can in their fictionaries. Having beam listening to your plans for a bossed on teaparty, I am therefore grieved to a degree that you have harvoured designs of cutting langwiches for spreading with potted tongue. Will anyone give keepons for them? No, Sir; leave them to spread themselves.

Once it befell that the elders of Erin did meet them together and take solemn counsel whereby they might bring once more into honour amongst mortal men the winged mouthmusic (my Erse!) of the sea-sundered Gael (vernaculee, vernacular) and to hell with the brutal Sassenach and his outlandish patois. Divil a man was ever the better for that forcemeat stuff. It's a nil, Win, that bodes nobody good. I do be thinking of the wreck of the Esperants that failed the stormy sea.

You wantum talk so plenty fella all place him savvy? Pidgin him plenty good lingo all time. Topside joss tellum all bimeby talk pidgin same like dis fella.

Turn again, Winningtone, swordbearer blunderin'! Pollyglot the catalan, we'll all have tea, and no more of this brain-sick linguish.

Yours am,
JAMES JOYCE (LESLIE JOHNSON)

*Johnson:* "What, Sir, is 'Basic English'? What is 'Basic'? The word, Sir, is as barbarous as is (if I apprehend it rightly) the underlying conception. 'Basic'? you will not find the word in my Dictionary. . . But if it means that we are to reduce the English language to its dregs, to debase it so that it may become the common jargon of uneducated mankind, then, Sir, I will have none of it."

*Boswell:* "But, Sir, if the English Prime Minister——"

*Johnson:* "Sir, the English Prime Minister was talking to American Professors in an American University. *Dulce est desipere in loco.* Ho! Ho! Ho! (*rolling himself about*). . . . No, Sir! the heritage bequeathed to us by our great writers shall not be . . ."

*Boswell:* "But, Sir, would not the making of the English tongue universal justify——?"

*Johnson:* "No, Sir! Nothing would justify so gross a vandalism! The English language is a mighty river, sprung from an hundred springs issuing from the ancient Earth or, if you prefer the metaphor, it is a lofty Cathedral built by the careful hands of a thousand masons from stones quarried from all the hills of Europe and of Asia.

"Shall we sell our birthright for a mess of pottage? Are we to drain that river to a puddle so that those who cannot swim may wallow in it? Are we to pull down that Cathedral to make a caravanserai for indigent travellers?" . . .

*Boswell:* "But, Sir——"

*Johnson:* "Pho! Sir, have done! You cannot put the Ocean into a pint pot—and there's an end on't!"

(WILLIAM BLISS)


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